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LATER POEMS



LATER POEMS



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# LATER POEMS

BY

W. B. YEATS

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1922

LATER POEMS

BY H. H. H. H.

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## PREFACE

THIS book contains all poetry not in dramatic form that I have written between my seven-and-twentieth year and the year 1921. I have included one long poem in dramatic form, of which a much shortened version, intended for stage representation, is in my book of plays. I have left out nearly all the long notes which seemed necessary before the work of various writers, but especially of my friend Lady Gregory, had made the circumstantial origins of my verse, in ancient legend or in the legends of the country side, familiar to readers of poetry.

THOOR BALLYLEE,  
*May 1922.*



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THE WIND AMONG THE REEDS  
(1899)



## THE HOSTING OF THE SIDHE

THE host is riding from Knocknarea  
And over the grave of Clooth-na bare;  
Caolte tossing his burning hair  
And Niamh calling *Away, come away :*  
*Empty your heart of its mortal dream.*  
*The winds awaken, the leaves whirl round,*  
*Our cheeks are pale, our hair is unbound,*  
*Our breasts are heaving, our eyes are a-gleam,*  
*Our arms are waving, our lips are apart ;*  
*And if any gaze on our rushing band,*  
*We come between him and the deed of his hand,*  
*We come between him and the hope of his heart.*  
The host is rushing 'twixt night and day,  
And where is there hope or deed as fair?  
Caolte tossing his burning hair,  
And Niamh calling *Away, come away.*



## THE EVERLASTING VOICES

O SWEET everlasting Voices, be still ;  
Go to the guards of the heavenly fold  
And bid them wander obeying your will  
Flame under flame, till Time be no more ;  
Have you not heard that our hearts are old,  
That you call in birds, in wind on the hill,  
In shaken boughs, in tide on the shore ?  
O sweet everlasting Voices, be still.

## THE MOODS

TIME drops in decay,  
Like a candle burnt out,  
And the mountains and woods  
Have their day, have their day ;  
What one in the rout  
Of the fire-born moods  
Has fallen away ?

## THE LOVER TELLS OF THE ROSE IN HIS HEART

ALL things uncomely and broken, all things  
worn out and old,  
The cry of a child by the roadway, the creak  
of a lumbering cart,  
The heavy steps of the ploughman, splashing  
the wintry mould,  
Are wronging your image that blossoms a  
rose in the deeps of my heart.

The wrong of unshapely things is a wrong  
too great to be told;  
I hunger to build them anew and sit on a  
green knoll apart,  
With the earth and the sky and the water,  
remade, like a casket of gold  
For my dreams of your image that blossoms  
a rose in the deeps of my heart.

## THE HOST OF THE AIR

O'DRISCOLL drove with a song  
The wild duck and the drake  
From the tall and the tufted reeds  
Of the drear Hart Lake.

And he saw how the reeds grew dark  
At the coming of night tide,  
And dreamed of the long dim hair  
Of Bridget his bride.

He heard while he sang and dreamed  
A piper piping away,  
And never was piping so sad,  
And never was piping so gay.

And he saw young men and young girls  
Who danced on a level place  
And Bridget his bride among them,  
With a sad and a gay face.

The dancers crowded about him,  
And many a sweet thing said,  
And a young man brought him red wine  
And a young girl white bread.

But Bridget drew him by the sleeve,  
Away from the merry bands,  
To old men playing at cards  
With a twinkling of ancient hands.

The bread and the wine had a doom,  
For these were the host of the air ;  
He sat and played in a dream  
Of her long dim hair.

He played with the merry old men  
And thought not of evil chance,  
Until one bore Bridget his bride  
Away from the merry dance.

He bore her away in his arms,  
The handsomest young man there,  
And his neck and his breast and his arms  
Were drowned in her long dim hair.

O'Driscoll scattered the cards  
And out of his dream awoke :  
Old men and young men and young girls  
Were gone like a drifting smoke ;

But he heard high up in the air  
A piper piping away,  
And never was piping so sad,  
And never was piping so gay.



## THE FISHERMAN

ALTHOUGH you hide in the ebb and flow  
Of the pale tide when the moon has set,  
The people of coming days will know  
About the casting out of my net,  
And how you have leaped times out of mind  
Over the little silver cords,  
And think that you were hard and unkind,  
And blame you with many bitter words.

## A CRADLE SONG

THE Danaan children laugh, in cradles of  
wrought gold,  
And clap their hands together, and half close  
their eyes,  
For they will ride the North when the ger-  
eagle flies,  
With heavy whitening wings, and a heart  
fallen cold :  
I kiss my wailing child and press it to my  
breast,  
And hear the narrow graves calling my child  
and me.  
Desolate winds that cry over the wandering  
sea ;  
Desolate winds that hover in the flaming  
West ;  
Desolate winds that beat the doors of  
Heaven, and beat  
The doors of Hell and blow there many a  
whimpering ghost ;  
O heart the winds have shaken ; the  
unappeasable host  
Is comelier than candles at Mother Mary's  
feet.

## INTO THE TWILIGHT

OUT-WORN heart, in a time out-worn,  
Come clear of the nets of wrong and right ;  
Laugh, heart, again in the grey twilight,  
Sigh, heart, again in the dew of the morn.

Your mother Eire is always young,  
Dew ever shining and twilight grey ;  
Though hope fall from you and love decay,  
Burning in fires of a slanderous tongue.

Come, heart, where hill is heaped upon hill :  
For there the mystical brotherhood  
Of sun and moon and hollow and wood  
And river and stream work out their will ;

And God stands winding His lonely horn,  
And time and the world are ever in flight ;  
And love is less kind than the grey twilight,  
And hope is less dear than the dew of the  
morn.

## THE SONG OF WANDERING AENGUS

I WENT out to the hazel wood,  
Because a fire was in my head,  
And cut and peeled a hazel wand,  
And hooked a berry to a thread;  
And when white moths were on the wing,  
And moth-like stars were flickering out,  
I dropped the berry in a stream  
And caught a little silver trout.

When I had laid it on the floor  
I went to blow the fire a-flame,  
But something rustled on the floor,  
And some one called me by my name:  
It had become a glimmering girl  
With apple blossom in her hair  
Who called me by my name and ran  
And faded through the brightening air.

Though I am old with wandering  
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,  
I will find out where she has gone,  
And kiss her lips and take her hands ;  
And walk among long dappled grass,  
And pluck till time and times are done  
The silver apples of the moon,  
The golden apples of the sun.

## THE SONG OF THE OLD MOTHER

I RISE in the dawn, and I kneel and blow  
Till the seed of the fire flicker and glow ;  
And then I must scrub and bake and sweep  
Till stars are beginning to blink and peep ;  
And the young lie long and dream in their  
bed

Of the matching of ribbons for bosom and  
head,

And their day goes over in idleness,  
And they sigh if the wind but lift a tress :  
While I must work because I am old,  
And the seed of the fire gets feeble and cold.

## THE HEART OF THE WOMAN

O WHAT to me the little room  
That was brimmed up with prayer and rest ;  
He bade me out into the gloom,  
And my breast lies upon his breast.

O what to me my mother's care,  
The house where I was safe and warm ;  
The shadowy blossom of my hair  
Will hide us from the bitter storm.

O hiding hair and dewy eyes,  
I am no more with life and death,  
My heart upon his warm heart lies,  
My breath is mixed into his breath.



## THE LOVER MOURNS FOR THE LOSS OF LOVE

PALE brows, still hands and dim hair,  
I had a beautiful friend  
And dreamed that the old despair  
Would end in love in the end:  
She looked in my heart one day  
And saw your image was there;  
She has gone weeping away.

HE MOURNS FOR THE CHANGE THAT  
HAS COME UPON HIM AND HIS  
BELOVED AND LONGS FOR THE  
END OF THE WORLD

Do you not hear me calling, white deer with  
no horns !  
I have been changed to a hound with one  
red ear ;  
I have been in the Path of Stones and the  
Wood of Thorns,  
For somebody hid hatred and hope and  
desire and fear  
Under my feet that they follow you night  
and day.  
A man with a hazel wand came without  
sound ;  
He changed me suddenly ; I was looking  
another way ;  
And now my calling is but the calling of a  
hound ;  
And Time and Birth and Change are hurry-  
ing by.

## 18 MOURNING AND LONGING

I would that the Boar without bristles had  
    come from the West  
And had rooted the sun and moon and stars  
    out of the sky  
And lay in the darkness, grunting, and turn-  
    ing to his rest.

## HE BIDS HIS BELOVED BE AT PEACE

I HEAR the Shadowy Horses, their long  
    manes a-shake,  
Their hoofs heavy with tumult, their eyes  
    glimmering white;  
The North unfolds above them clinging,  
    creeping night,  
The East her hidden joy before the morn-  
    ing break,  
The West weeps in pale dew and sighs  
    passing away,  
The South is pouring down roses of crimson  
    fire:  
O vanity of Sleep, Hope, Dream, endless  
    Desire,  
The Horses of Disaster plunge in the heavy  
    clay:  
Beloved, let your eyes half close, and your  
    heart beat  
Over my heart, and your hair fall over my  
    breast,  
Drowning love's lonely hour in deep twilight  
    of rest,  
And hiding their tossing manes and their  
    tumultuous feet.

## HE REPROVES THE CURLEW

O, CURLEW, cry no more in the air,  
Or only to the water in the West;  
Because your crying brings to my mind  
Passion-dimmed eyes and long heavy hair  
That was shaken out over my breast:  
There is enough evil in the crying of wind.

## HE REMEMBERS FORGOTTEN BEAUTY

WHEN my arms wrap you round I press  
My heart upon the loveliness  
That has long faded from the world ;  
The jewelled crowns that kings have hurled  
In shadowy pools, when armies fled ;  
The love-tales wrought with silken thread  
By dreaming ladies upon cloth  
That has made fat the murderous moth ;  
The roses that of old time were  
Woven by ladies in their hair,  
The dew-cold lilies ladies bore  
Through many a sacred corridor  
Where such grey clouds of incense rose  
That only the gods' eyes did not close :  
For that pale breast and lingering hand  
Come from a more dream-heavy land,  
A more dream-heavy hour than this ;  
And when you sigh from kiss to kiss  
I hear white Beauty sighing, too,  
For hours when all must fade like dew,  
But flame on flame, and deep on deep,  
Throne over throne where in half sleep,  
Their swords upon their iron knees,  
Brood her high lonely mysteries.

## A POET TO HIS BELOVED

I BRING you with reverent hands  
The books of my numberless dreams ;  
White woman that passion has worn  
As the tide wears the dove-grey sands,  
And with heart more old than the horn  
That is brimmed from the pale fire of time :  
White woman with numberless dreams  
I bring you my passionate rhyme.

## HE GIVES HIS BELOVED CERTAIN RHYMES

FASTEN your hair with a golden pin,  
And bind up every wandering tress ;  
I bade my heart build these poor rhymes :  
It worked at them, day out, day in,  
Building a sorrowful loveliness  
Out of the battles of old times.

You need but lift a pearl-pale hand,  
And bind up your long hair and sigh ;  
And all men's hearts must burn and beat ;  
And candle-like foam on the dim sand,  
And stars climbing the dew-dropping sky,  
Live but to light your passing feet.



TO HIS HEART, BIDDING IT  
HAVE NO FEAR

BE you still, be you still, trembling heart ;  
Remember the wisdom out of the old days :  
*Him who trembles before the flame and the flood,  
And the winds that blow through the starry  
ways,  
Let the starry winds and the flame and the flood  
Cover over and hide, for he has no part  
With the lonely, majestic multitude.*

## THE CAP AND BELLS

THE jester walked in the garden :  
The garden had fallen still ;  
He bade his soul rise upward  
And stand on her window-sill.

It rose in a straight blue garment,  
When owls began to call :  
It had grown wise-tongued by thinking  
Of a quiet and light footfall ;

But the young queen would not listen ;  
She rose in her pale night gown ;  
She drew in the heavy casement  
And pushed the latches down.

He bade his heart go to her,  
When the owls called out no more ;  
In a red and quivering garment  
It sang to her through the door.

It had grown sweet-tongued by dreaming,  
Of a flutter of flower-like hair ;  
But she took up her fan from the table  
And waved it off on the air.

“ I have cap and bells,” he pondered,  
“ I will send them to her and die ”;  
And when the morning whitened  
He left them where she went by.

She laid them upon her bosom,  
Under a cloud of her hair,  
And her red lips sang them a love-song :  
Till stars grew out of the air.

She opened her door and her window,  
And the heart and the soul came through,  
To her right hand came the red one,  
To her left hand came the blue.

They set up a noise like crickets,  
A chattering wise and sweet,  
And her hair was a folded flower  
And the quiet of love in her feet.

## THE VALLEY OF THE BLACK PIG

THE dews drop slowly and dreams gather :  
    unknown spears  
Suddenly hurtle before my dream-awakened  
    eyes,  
And then the clash of fallen horsemen and  
    the cries  
Of unknown perishing armies beat about my  
    ears.  
We who still labour by the cromlec on the  
    shore,  
The grey cairn on the hill, when day sinks  
    drowned in dew,  
Being weary of the world's empires, bow  
    down to you,  
Master of the still stars and of the flaming  
    door.

## THE LOVER ASKS FORGIVENESS BECAUSE OF HIS MANY MOODS

IF this importunate heart trouble your peace  
With words lighter than air,  
Or hopes that in mere hoping flicker and  
    cease ;  
Crumple the rose in your hair ;  
And cover your lips with odorous twilight  
    and say,  
“ O Hearts of wind-blown flame !  
O Winds, elder than changing of night and  
    day,  
That murmuring and longing came,  
From marble cities loud with tabors of old  
In dove-grey faery lands ;  
From battle banners, fold upon purple fold,  
Queens wrought with glimmering hands ;  
That saw young Niamh hover with love-lorn  
    face  
Above the wandering tide ;  
And lingered in the hidden desolate place,  
Where the last Phœnix died  
And wrapped the flames above his holy head ;  
And still murmur and long :

ASKING FORGIVENESS 29

O Piteous Hearts, changing till change be  
dead

In a tumultuous song ”:

And cover the pale blossoms of your breast

With your dim heavy hair,

And trouble with a sigh for all things longing  
for rest

The odorous twilight there.

## HE TELLS OF A VALLEY FULL OF LOVERS

I DREAMED that I stood in a valley, and amid  
sighs,  
For happy lovers passed two by two where I  
stood ;  
And I dreamed my lost love came stealthily  
out of the wood  
With her cloud-pale eyelids falling on dream-  
dimmed eyes :  
I cried in my dream, *O women, bid the young  
men lay  
Their heads on your knees, and drown their eyes  
with your hair,  
Or remembering hers they will find no other face  
fair  
Till all the valleys of the world have been  
withered away.*

## HE TELLS OF THE PERFECT BEAUTY

O CLOUD-PALE eyelids, dream-dimmed eyes,  
The poets labouring all their days  
To build a perfect beauty in rhyme  
Are overthrown by a woman's gaze  
And by the unlabouring brood of the skies :  
And therefore my heart will bow, when dew  
Is dropping sleep, until God burn time,  
Before the unlabouring stars and you.



## HE HEARS THE CRY OF THE SEGE

I WANDER by the edge  
Of this desolate lake  
Where wind cries in the sege:  
*Until the axle break  
That keeps the stars in their round,  
And hands hurl in the deep  
The banners of East and West,  
And the girdle of light is unbound,  
Your breast will not lie by the breast  
Of your beloved in sleep.*

HE THINKS OF THOSE WHO HAVE  
SPOKEN EVIL OF HIS BELOVED

HALF close your eyelids, loosen your hair,  
And dream about the great and their pride ;  
They have spoken against you everywhere,  
But weigh this song with the great and their  
pride ;  
I made it out of a mouthful of air,  
Their children's children shall say they have  
lied.

## THE BLESSED

CUMHAL called out, bending his head,  
Till Dathi came and stood,  
With a blink in his eyes at the cave mouth,  
Between the wind and the wood.

And Cumhal said, bending his knees,  
“ I have come by the windy way  
To gather the half of your blessedness  
And learn to pray when you pray.

“ I can bring you salmon out of the streams  
And heron out of the skies.”  
But Dathi folded his hands and smiled  
With the secrets of God in his eyes.

And Cumhal saw like a drifting smoke  
All manner of blessed souls,  
Women and children, young men with books,  
And old men with croziers and stoles.

“ Praise God and God’s mother,” Dathi said,  
“ For God and God’s mother have sent  
The blessedest souls that walk in the world  
To fill your heart with content.”

“ And which is the blessedest,” Cumhal said,  
“ Where all are comely and good ?  
Is it these that with golden thuribles  
Are singing about the wood ? ”

“ My eyes are blinking,” Dathi said,  
“ With the secrets of God half blind,  
But I can see where the wind goes  
And follow the way of the wind ;

“ And blessedness goes where the wind goes,  
And when it is gone we are dead ;  
I see the blessedest soul in the world  
And he nods a drunken head.

“ O blessedness comes in the night and the  
day  
And whither the wise heart knows ;  
And one has seen in the redness of wine  
The Incorruptible Rose,

“ That drowsily drops faint leaves on him  
And the sweetness of desire,  
While time and the world are ebbing away  
In twilights of dew and of fire.”

## THE SECRET ROSE

FAR off, most secret, and inviolate Rose,  
Enfold me in my hour of hours ; where those  
Who sought thee in the Holy Sepulchre,  
Or in the wine vat, dwell beyond the stir  
And tumult of defeated dreams ; and deep  
Among pale eyelids, heavy with the sleep  
Men have named beauty. Thy great leaves  
enfold

The ancient beards, the helms of ruby and  
gold

Of the crowned Magi ; and the king whose  
eyes

Saw the Pierced Hands and Rood of elder  
rise

In Druid vapour and make the torches dim ;

Till vain frenzy awoke and he died ; and him

Who met Fand walking among flaming dew

By a grey shore where the wind never blew,

And lost the world and Emer for a kiss ;

And him who drove the gods out of their liss,

And till a hundred morns had flowered red,

Feasted and wept the barrows of his dead ;

And the proud dreaming king who flung the  
crown

And sorrow away, and calling bard and  
clown

Dwelt among wine-stained wanderers in deep  
woods ;

And him who sold tillage, and house, and  
goods,

And sought through lands and islands  
numberless years,

Until he found with laughter and with tears,  
A woman, of so shining loveliness,

That men threshed corn at midnight by a  
tress,

A little stolen tress. I, too, await

The hour of thy great wind of love and hate.

When shall the stars be blown about the sky,  
Like the sparks blown out of a smithy, and  
die ?

Surely thine hour has come, thy great wind  
blows,

Far off, most secret, and inviolate Rose ?

## MAID QUIET

WHERE has Maid Quiet gone to,  
Nodding her russet hood ?  
The winds that awakened the stars  
Are blowing through my blood.  
O how could I be so calm  
When she rose up to depart ?  
Now words that called up the lightning  
Are hurtling through my heart.

## THE TRAVAIL OF PASSION

WHEN the flaming lute-thronged angelic  
door is wide ;  
When an immortal passion breathes in mortal  
clay ;  
Our hearts endure the scourge, the plaited  
thorns, the way  
Crowded with bitter faces, the wounds in  
palm and side,  
The vinegar-heavy sponge, the flowers by  
Kedron stream ;  
We will bend down and loosen our hair over  
you,  
That it may drop faint perfume, and be  
heavy with dew,  
Lilies of death-pale hope, roses of passionate  
dream.



THE LOVER PLEADS WITH HIS  
FRIEND FOR OLD FRIENDS

THOUGH you are in your shining days,  
Voices among the crowd  
And new friends busy with your praise,  
Be not unkind or proud,  
But think about old friends the most :  
Time's bitter flood will rise,  
Your beauty perish and be lost  
For all eyes but these eyes.

A LOVER SPEAKS TO THE HEARERS  
OF HIS SONGS IN COMING DAYS

O, WOMEN, kneeling by your altar rails long  
hence,  
When songs I wove for my beloved hide the  
prayer,  
And smoke from this dead heart drifts  
through the violet air  
And covers away the smoke of myrrh and  
frankincense ;  
Bend down and pray for all that sin I wove  
in song,  
Till the Attorney for Lost Souls cry her  
sweet cry,  
And call to my beloved and me : “ No  
longer fly  
Amid the hovering, piteous, penitential  
throng.”

## THE POET PLEADS WITH THE ELEMENTAL POWERS

THE Powers whose name and shape no living  
creature knows  
Have pulled the Immortal Rose ;  
And though the Seven Lights bowed in their  
dance and wept,  
The Polar Dragon slept,  
His heavy rings uncoiled from glimmering  
deep to deep :  
When will he wake from sleep ?  
46

Great Powers of falling wave and wind and  
windy fire,  
With your harmonious choir  
Encircle her I love and sing her into peace,  
That my old care may cease ;  
Unfold your flaming wings and cover out of  
sight  
The nets of day and night.

THE ELEMENTAL POWERS 43

Dim Powers of drowsy thought, let her no  
longer be

Like the pale cup of the sea,

When winds have gathered and sun and  
moon burned dim

Above its cloudy rim ;

But let a gentle silence wrought with music  
flow

Whither her footsteps go.

HE WISHES HIS BELOVED  
WERE DEAD

WERE you but lying cold and dead,  
And lights were paling out of the West,  
You would come hither, and bend your head,  
And I would lay my head on your breast ;  
And you would murmur tender words,  
Forgiving me, because you were dead :  
Nor would you rise and hasten away,  
Though you have the will of the wild birds,  
But know your hair was bound and wound  
About the stars and moon and sun :  
O would, beloved, that you lay  
Under the dock-leaves in the ground,  
While lights were paling one by one.

## HE WISHES FOR THE CLOTHS OF HEAVEN

HAD I the heavens' embroidered cloths,  
Enwrought with golden and silver light,  
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths  
Of night and light and the half light,  
I would spread the cloths under your feet :  
But I, being poor, have only my dreams ;  
I have spread my dreams under your feet ;  
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

HE THINKS OF HIS PAST GREATNESS  
WHEN A PART OF THE CONSTEL-  
LATIONS OF HEAVEN

I HAVE drunk ale from the Country of the  
Young  
And weep because I know all things now :  
I have been a hazel tree and they hung  
The Pilot Star and the Crooked Plough  
Among my leaves in times out of mind :  
I became a rush that horses tread :  
I became a man, a hater of the wind,  
Knowing one, out of all things, alone, that  
his head  
Would not lie on the breast or his lips on  
the hair  
Of the woman that he loves, until he dies.  
O beast of the wilderness, bird of the air,  
Must I endure your amorous cries ?

## THE FIDDLER OF DOONEY

WHEN I play on my fiddle in Dooney,  
Folk dance like a wave of the sea ;  
My cousin is priest in Kilvarnet,  
My brother in Mocharabuiee.

I passed my brother and cousin :  
They read in their books of prayer ;  
I read in my book of songs  
I bought at the Sligo fair.

When we come at the end of time,  
To Peter sitting in state,  
He will smile on the three old spirits,  
But call me first through the gate ;

For the good are always the merry,  
Save by an evil chance,  
And the merry love the fiddle  
And the merry love to dance :

And when the folk there spy me,  
They will all come up to me,  
With " Here is the fiddler of Dooney !"  
And dance like a wave of the sea.





THE OLD AGE OF QUEEN MAEVE  
(1903)



## THE OLD AGE OF QUEEN MAEVE

MAEVE the great queen was pacing to and  
fro,  
Between the walls covered with beaten  
bronze,  
In her high house at Cruachan; the long  
hearth,  
Flickering with ash and hazel, but half  
showed  
Where the tired horse-boys lay upon the  
rushes,  
Or on the benches underneath the walls,  
In comfortable sleep; all living slept  
But that great queen, who more than half  
the night  
Had paced from door to fire and fire to door.  
Though now in her old age, in her young age  
She had been beautiful in that old way  
That's all but gone; for the proud heart is  
gone,  
And the fool heart of the counting-house  
fears all  
But soft beauty and indolent desire.

## 52 OLD AGE OF QUEEN MAEVE

She could have called over the rim of the  
world

Whatever woman's lover had hit her fancy,  
And yet had been great bodied and great  
limbed,

Fashioned to be the mother of strong  
children ;

And she'd had lucky eyes and a high heart,  
And wisdom that caught fire like the dried  
flax,

At need, and made her beautiful and fierce,  
Sudden and laughing.

O unquiet heart,  
Why do you praise another, praising her,  
As if there were no tale but your own tale  
Worth knitting to a measure of sweet sound ?  
Have I not bid you tell of that great queen  
Who has been buried some two thousand  
years ?

When night was at its deepest, a wild goose  
Cried from the porter's lodge, and with long  
clamour

Shook the ale horns and shields upon their  
hooks ;

But the horse-boys slept on, as though some  
power

Had filled the house with Druid heaviness ;  
And wondering who of the many-changing  
Sidhe

Had come as in the old times to counsel her,

## OLD AGE OF QUEEN MAEVE 53

Maeve walked, yet with slow footfall, being  
old,

To that small chamber by the outer gate.

The porter slept, although he sat upright

With still and stony limbs and open eyes.

Maeve waited, and when that ear-piercing  
noise

Broke from his parted lips and broke again,

She laid a hand on either of his shoulders,

And shook him wide awake, and bid him say

Who of the wandering many-changing ones

Had troubled his sleep. But all he had to  
say

Was that, the air being heavy and the dogs

More still than they had been for a good  
month,

He had fallen asleep, and, though he had  
dreamed nothing,

He could remember when he had had fine  
dreams.

It was before the time of the great war

Over the White-Horned Bull, and the  
Brown Bull.

She turned away ; he turned again to sleep

That no god troubled now, and, wondering

What matters were afoot among the Sidhe,

Maeve walked through that great hall, and  
with a sigh

Lifted the curtain of her sleeping-room,

Remembering that she too had seemed divine

## 54 OLD AGE OF QUEEN MAEVE

To many thousand eyes, and to her own  
One that the generations had long waited  
That work too difficult for mortal hands  
Might be accomplished. Bunching the curtain up

She saw her husband Ailell sleeping there,  
And thought of days when he'd had a straight body,  
And of that famous Fergus, Nessa's husband,  
Who had been the lover of her middle life.

Suddenly Ailell spoke out of his sleep,  
And not with his own voice or a man's voice,  
But with the burning, live, unshaken voice,  
Of those that it may be can never age.

He said, "High Queen of Cruachan and  
Magh Ai,  
A king of the Great Plain would speak with  
you."

And with glad voice Maeve answered him,  
"What king  
Of the far wandering shadows has come to  
me?"

As in the old days when they would come  
and go

About my threshold to counsel and to help."  
The parted lips replied, "I seek your help,  
For I am Aengus, and I am crossed in love."  
"How may a mortal whose life gutters out  
Help them that wander with hand clasping  
hand,

## OLD AGE OF QUEEN MAEVE 55

Their haughty images that cannot wither,  
For all their beauty's like a hollow dream,  
Mirrored in streams that neither hail nor  
rain

Nor the cold North has troubled ? ”

He replied :

“ I am from those rivers and I bid you call  
The children of the Maines out of sleep,  
And set them digging under Bual's hill.  
We shadows, while they uproot his earthy  
house,

Will overthrow his shadows and carry off  
Caer, his blue-eyed daughter that I love.  
I helped your fathers when they built these  
walls,

And I would have your help in my great need,  
Queen of high Cruachan.”

“ I obey your will

With speedy feet and a most thankful heart :  
For you have been, O Aengus of the birds,  
Our giver of good counsel and good luck.”

And with a groan, as if the mortal breath  
Could but awaken sadly upon lips  
That happier breath had moved, her husband  
turned

Face downward, tossing in a troubled sleep ;  
But Maeve, and not with a slow feeble foot,  
Came to the threshold of the painted house,  
Where her grandchildren slept, and cried  
aloud,

Until the pillared dark began to stir



## 56 OLD AGE OF QUEEN MAEVE

With shouting and the clang of unhooked  
arms.

She told them of the many-changing ones ;  
And all that night, and all through the next  
day

To middle night, they dug into the hill.

At middle night great cats with silver claws,  
Bodies of shadow and blind eyes like pearls,  
Came up out of the hole, and red-eared  
hounds

With long white bodies came out of the air  
Suddenly, and ran at them and harried them.

The Maines' children dropped their spades,  
and stood

With quaking joints and terror-stricken  
faces,

Till Maeve called out : " These are but  
common men.

The Maines' children have not dropped their  
spades,

Because Earth, crazy for its broken power,  
Casts up a show and the winds answer it  
With holy shadows." Her high heart was  
glad,

And when the uproar ran along the grass  
She followed with light footfall in the midst,  
Till it died out where an old thorn tree stood.

Friend of these many years, you too had stood  
With equal courage in that whirling rout ;

## OLD AGE OF QUEEN MAEVE 57

For you, although you've not her wandering  
heart,

Have all that greatness, and not hers alone,

For there is no high story about queens

In any ancient book but tells of you ;

And when I've heard how they grew old and  
died,

Or fell into unhappiness, I've said :

" She will grow old and die, and she has  
wept ! "

And when I'd write it out anew, the words,

Half crazy with the thought, She too has  
wept !

Outrun the measure.

I'd tell of that great queen

Who stood amid a silence by the thorn

Until two lovers came out of the air

With bodies made out of soft fire. The one,

About whose face birds wagged their fiery  
wings,

Said : " Aengus and his sweetheart give  
their thanks

To Maeve and to Maeve's household, owing  
all

In owing them the bride-bed that gives  
peace."

Then Maeve : " O Aengus, Master of all  
lovers,

A thousand years ago you held high talk

With the first kings of many - pillared  
Cruachan.

## 58 OLD AGE OF QUEEN MAEVE

O when will you grow weary ? ”

They had vanished ;  
But out of the dark air over her head there  
came

A murmur of soft words and meeting lips.

BAILE AND AILLINN  
(1903)



## BAILE AND AILLINN

*Argument.* Baile and Aillinn were lovers, but Aengus, the Master of Love, wishing them to be happy in his own land among the dead, told to each a story of the other's death, so that their hearts were broken and they died.

*I HARDLY hear the curlew cry,  
Nor the grey rush when the wind is high,  
Before my thoughts begin to run  
On the heir of Ulad, Buan's son,  
Baile, who had the honey mouth ;  
And that mild woman of the south,  
Aillinn, who was King Lugaid's heir.  
Their love was never drowned in care  
Of this or that thing, nor grew cold  
Because their bodies had grown old.  
Being forbid to marry on earth,  
They blossomed to immortal mirth.*

About the time when Christ was born,  
When the long wars for the White Horn  
And the Brown Bull had not yet come,  
Young Baile Honey-Mouth, whom some  
Called rather Baile Little-Land,  
Rode out of Emain with a band  
Of harpers and young men ; and they  
Imagined, as they struck the way

To many-pastured Muirthemne,  
That all things fell out happily,  
And there, for all that fools had said,  
Baile and Aillinn would be wed.

They found an old man running there :  
He had ragged long grass-coloured hair ;  
He had knees that stuck out of his hose ;  
He had puddle water in his shoes ;  
He had half a cloak to keep him dry,  
Although he had a squirrel's eye.

*O wandering birds and rushy beds,  
You put such folly in our heads  
With all this crying in the wind ;  
No common love is to our mind,  
And our poor Kate or Nan is less  
Than any whose unhappiness  
Awoke the harp-strings long ago.  
Yet they that know all things but know  
That all life had to give us is  
A child's laughter, a woman's kiss.  
Who was it put so great a scorn  
In the grey reeds that night and morn  
Are trodden and broken by the herds,  
And in the light bodies of birds  
That north wind tumbles to and fro  
And pinches among hail and snow ?*

That runner said : " I am from the south ;  
I run to Baile Honey-Mouth,

To tell him how the girl Aillinn  
Rode from the country of her kin,  
And old and young men rode with her :  
For all that country had been astir  
If anybody half as fair  
Had chosen a husband anywhere  
But where it could see her every day.  
When they had ridden a little way  
An old man caught the horse's head  
With : ' You must home again, and wed  
With somebody in your own land.'  
A young man cried and kissed her hand,  
' O lady, wed with one of us ' ;  
And when no face grew piteous  
For any gentle thing she spake,  
She fell and died of the heart-break."

Because a lover's heart's worn out,  
Being tumbled and blown about  
By its own blind imagining,  
And will believe that anything  
That is bad enough to be true, is true,  
Baile's heart was broken in two ;  
And he being laid upon green boughs,  
Was carried to the goodly house  
Where the Hound of Ulad sat before  
The brazen pillars of his door,  
His face bowed low to weep the end  
Of the harper's daughter and her friend.  
For although years had passed away  
He always wept them on that day,



For on that day they had been betrayed ;  
And now that Honey-Mouth is laid  
Under a cairn of sleepy stone  
Before his eyes, he has tears for none,  
Although he is carrying stone, but two  
For whom the cairn's but heaped anew.

*We hold because our memory is  
So full of that thing and of this  
That out of sight is out of mind.  
But the grey rush under the wind  
And the grey bird with crooked bill  
Have such long memories, that they still  
Remember Deirdre and her man ;  
And when we walk with Kate or Nan  
About the windy water side,  
Our heart can hear the voices chide.  
How could we be so soon content,  
Who know the way that Naoise went ?  
And they have news of Deirdre's eyes,  
Who being lovely was so wise—  
Ah ! wise, my heart knows well how wise.*

Now had that old gaunt crafty one,  
Gathering his cloak about him, run  
Where Aillinn rode with waiting maids,  
Who amid leafy lights and shades  
Dreamed of the hands that would unlace  
Their bodices in some dim place  
When they had come to the marriage bed ;  
And harpers, pacing with high head

As though their music were enough  
To make the savage heart of love  
Grow gentle without sorrowing,  
Imagining and pondering  
Heaven knows what calamity ;

“ Another’s hurried off,” cried he,  
“ From heat and cold and wind and wave ;  
They have heaped the stones above his grave  
In Muirthemne, and over it  
In changeless Ogham letters writ—  
*Baile, that was of Rury’s seed.*  
But the gods long ago decreed  
No waiting maid should ever spread  
Baile and Aillinn’s marriage bed,  
For they should clip and clip again  
Where wild bees hive on the Great Plain.  
Therefore it is but little news  
That put this hurry in my shoes.”

Then seeing that he scarce had spoke  
Before her love-worn heart had broke,  
He ran and laughed until he came  
To that high hill the herdsmen name  
The Hill Seat of Leighin, because  
Some god or king had made the laws  
That held the land together there,  
In old times among the clouds of the air.

That old man climbed ; the day grew dim ;  
Two swans came flying up to him,

Linked by a gold chain each to each,  
And with low murmuring laughing speech  
Alighted on the windy grass.  
They knew him : his changed body was  
Tall, proud and ruddy, and light wings  
Were hovering over the harp-strings  
That Etain, Midhir's wife, had wove  
In the hid place, being crazed by love.

What shall I call them ? fish that swim,  
Scale rubbing scale where light is dim  
By a broad water-lily leaf ;  
Or mice in the one wheaten sheaf  
Forgotten at the threshing place ;  
Or birds lost in the one clear space  
Of morning light in a dim sky ;  
Or, it may be, the eyelids of one eye,  
Or the door pillars of one house,  
Or two sweet blossoming apple-boughs  
That have one shadow on the ground ;  
Or the two strings that made one sound  
Where that wise harper's finger ran.  
For this young girl and this young man  
Have happiness without an end,  
Because they have made so good a friend.

They know all wonders, for they pass  
The towery gates of Gorias,  
And Findrias and Falias,  
And long-forgotten Murias,  
Among the giant kings whose hoard,

Cauldron and spear and stone and sword,  
Was robbed before earth gave the wheat ;  
Wandering from broken street to street  
They come where some huge watcher is,  
And tremble with their love and kiss.

They know undying things, for they  
Wander where earth withers away,  
Though nothing troubles the great streams  
But light from the pale stars, and gleams  
From the holy orchards, where there is none  
But fruit that is of precious stone,  
Or apples of the sun and moon.

What were our praise to them ? 'They eat  
Quiet's wild heart, like daily meat ;  
Who when night thickens are afloat  
On dappled skins in a glass boat,  
Far out under a windless sky ;  
While over them birds of Aengus fly,  
And over the tiller and the prow,  
And waving white wings to and fro  
Awaken wanderings of light air  
To stir their coverlet and their hair.

And poets found, old writers say,  
A yew tree where his body lay ;  
But a wild apple hid the grass  
With its sweet blossom where hers was ;  
And being in good heart, because  
A better time had come again

After the deaths of many men,  
And that long fighting at the ford,  
They wrote on tablets of thin board,  
Made of the apple and the yew,  
All the love stories that they knew.

*Let rush and bird cry out their fill  
Of the harper's daughter if they will,  
Beloved, I am not afraid of her.  
She is not wiser nor lovelier,  
And you are more high of heart than she,  
For all her wanderings over-sea ;  
But I'd have bird and rush forget  
Those other two ; for never yet  
Has lover lived, but longed to wive  
Like them that are no more alive.*

IN THE SEVEN WOODS  
(1904)



## IN THE SEVEN WOODS

I HAVE heard the pigeons of the Seven Woods  
Make their faint thunder, and the garden  
    bees  
Hum in the lime tree flowers ; and put away  
The unavailing outcries and the old bitter-  
    ness  
That empty the heart. I have forgot awhile  
Tara uprooted, and new commonness  
Upon the throne and crying about the  
    streets  
And hanging its paper flowers from post to  
    post,  
Because it is alone of all things happy.  
I am contented for I know that Quiet  
Wanders laughing and eating her wild heart  
Among pigeons and bees, while that Great  
    Archer,  
Who but awaits His hour to shoot, still  
    hangs  
A cloudy quiver over Parc-na-Lee.

*August 1902.*



## THE ARROW

I THOUGHT of your beauty, and this arrow,  
Made out of a wild thought, is in my  
marrow.

There's no man may look upon her, no man ;  
As when newly grown to be a woman,  
Tall and noble but with face and bosom  
Delicate in colour as apple blossom.  
This beauty's kinder, yet for a reason  
I could weep that the old is out of season.

## THE FOLLY OF BEING COMFORTED

ONE that is ever kind said yesterday :  
“ Your well-beloved’s hair has threads of  
grey,  
And little shadows come about her eyes ;  
Time can but make it easier to be wise  
Though now it seem impossible, and so  
Patience is all that you have need of.”

No,  
I have not a crumb of comfort, not a grain,  
Time can but make her beauty over again :  
Because of that great nobleness of hers  
The fire that stirs about her, when she stirs  
Burns but more clearly. O she had not  
these ways,  
When all the wild summer was in her gaze.  
O heart ! O heart ! if she’d but turn her  
head,  
You’d know the folly of being comforted.

## OLD MEMORY

O THOUGHT, fly to her when the end of day  
Awakens an old memory, and say,  
“ Your strength, that is so lofty and fierce  
and kind,  
It might call up a new age, calling to mind  
The queens that were imagined long ago,  
Is but half yours : he kneaded in the dough  
Through the long years of youth, and who  
would have thought  
It all, and more than it all, would come to  
naught,  
And that dear words meant nothing ? ” But  
enough,  
For when we have blamed the wind we can  
blame love ;  
Or, if there needs be more, be nothing said  
That would be harsh for children that have  
strayed.

## NEVER GIVE ALL THE HEART

NEVER give all the heart, for love  
Will hardly seem worth thinking of  
To passionate women if it seem  
Certain, and they never dream  
That it fades out from kiss to kiss ;  
For everything that's lovely is  
But a brief dreamy kind delight.  
O never give the heart outright,  
For they, for all smooth lips can say,  
Have given their hearts up to the play.  
And who could play it well enough  
If deaf and dumb and blind with love ?  
He that made this knows all the cost,  
For he gave all his heart and lost.

## THE WITHERING OF THE BOUGHS

I CRIED when the moon was murmuring to  
the birds :

“ Let peewit call and curlew cry where they  
will,

I long for your merry and tender and pitiful  
words,

For the roads are unending, and there is no  
place to my mind.”

The honey-pale moon lay low on the sleepy  
hill,

And I fell asleep upon lonely Echtge of  
streams.

No boughs have withered because of the  
wintry wind ;

The boughs have withered because I have  
told them my dreams.

I know of the leafy paths that the witches  
take,

Who come with their crowns of pearl and  
their spindles of wool,

And their secret smile, out of the depths of  
the lake ;

## WITHERING OF THE BOUGHS 77

I know where a dim moon drifts, where the  
Danaan kind  
Wind and unwind their dances when the  
light grows cool  
On the island lawns, their feet where the  
pale foam gleams.  
No boughs have withered because of the  
wintry wind ;  
The boughs have withered because I have  
told them my dreams.

I know of the sleepy country, where swans  
fly round  
Coupled with golden chains, and sing as  
they fly.  
A king and a queen are wandering there,  
and the sound  
Has made them so happy and hopeless, so  
deaf and so blind  
With wisdom, they wander till all the years  
have gone by ;  
I know, and the curlew and peewit on  
Echtge of streams.  
No boughs have withered because of the  
wintry wind ;  
The boughs have withered because I have  
told them my dreams.

## ADAM'S CURSE

WE sat together at one summer's end,  
That beautiful mild woman, your close  
friend,  
And you and I, and talked of poetry.

I said : " A line will take us hours maybe ;  
Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,  
Our stitching and unstitching has been  
naught.

Better go down upon your marrow bones  
And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break  
stones

Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather ;  
For to articulate sweet sounds together  
Is to work harder than all these, and yet  
Be thought an idler by the noisy set  
Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen  
The martyrs call the world."

And thereupon  
That beautiful mild woman for whose sake  
There's many a one shall find out all heart-  
ache

On finding that her voice is sweet and low  
Replied : " To be born woman is to know,  
Although they do not talk of it at school—  
That we must labour to be beautiful."

I said : " It's certain there is no fine thing  
Since Adam's fall but needs much labouring.  
There have been lovers who thought love  
should be

So much compounded of high courtesy  
That they would sigh and quote with learned  
looks

Precedents out of beautiful old books ;  
Yet now it seems an idle trade enough."

We sat grown quiet at the name of love ;  
We saw the last embers of daylight die,  
And in the trembling blue-green of the sky  
A moon, worn as if it had been a shell  
Washed by time's waters as they rose and fell  
About the stars and broke in days and years.

I had a thought for no one's but your ears ;  
That you were beautiful, and that I strove  
To love you in the old high way of love ;  
That it had all seemed happy, and yet we'd  
grown  
As weary hearted as that hollow moon.



RED HANRAHAN'S SONG  
ABOUT IRELAND

THE old brown thorn trees break in two  
    high over Cummen Strand,  
Under a bitter black wind that blows from  
    the left hand ;  
Our courage breaks like an old tree in a  
    black wind and dies,  
But we have hidden in our hearts the flame  
    out of the eyes  
Of Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan.

The wind has bundled up the clouds high  
    over Knocknarea,  
And thrown the thunder on the stones for all  
    that Maeve can say.  
Angers that are like noisy clouds have set our  
    hearts abeat ;  
But we have all bent low and low and kissed  
    the quiet feet  
Of Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan.

RED HANRAHAN'S SONG 81

The yellow pool has overflowed high up on  
Clooth-na-Bare,  
For the wet winds are blowing out of the  
clinging air ;  
Like heavy flooded waters our bodies and  
our blood ;  
But purer than a tall candle before the Holy  
Rood  
Is Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan.

## THE OLD MEN ADMIRING THEMSELVES IN THE WATER

I HEARD the old, old men say,  
“ Everything alters,  
And one by one we drop away.”  
They had hands like claws, and their knees  
Were twisted like the old thorn trees  
By the waters.  
I heard the old, old men say,  
“ All that’s beautiful drifts away  
Like the waters.”

## UNDER THE MOON

I HAVE no happiness in dreaming of Bryce-  
linde,  
Nor Avalon the grass-green hollow, nor  
Joyous Isle,  
Where one found Lancelot crazed and hid  
him for a while ;  
Nor Ulad, when Naoise had thrown a sail  
upon the wind ;  
Nor lands that seem too dim to be burdens  
on the heart :  
Land-under-Wave, where out of the moon's  
light and the sun's  
Seven old sisters wind the threads of the  
long-lived ones,  
Land-of-the-Tower, where Aengus has  
thrown the gates apart,  
And Wood-of-Wonders, where one kills an  
ox at dawn,  
To find it when night falls laid on a golden  
bier.  
Therein are many queens like Branwen and  
Guinivere ;  
And Niamh and Laban and Fand, who could  
change to an otter or fawn,

And the wood-woman, whose lover was  
    changed to a blue-eyed hawk ;  
And whether I go in my dreams by wood-  
    land, or dun, or shore,  
Or on the unpeopled waves with kings to  
    pull at the oar,  
I hear the harp-string praise them, or hear  
    their mournful talk.

Because of something told under the famished  
    horn  
Of the hunter's moon, that hung between  
    the night and the day,  
To dream of women whose beauty was folded  
    in dismay,  
Even in an old story, is a burden not to be  
    borne.

## THE RAGGED WOOD

O HURRY where by water among the trees,  
The delicate stepping stag and his lady sigh  
When they have but looked upon their  
images,  
Would none had ever loved but you and I !

Or have you heard that sliding silver-shoed,  
Pale silver-proud queen-woman of the sky,  
When the sun looked out of his golden hood :  
O that none ever loved but you and I !

O hurry to the ragged wood, for there  
I will drive all those lovers out and cry—  
O my share of the world, O yellow hair,  
No one has ever loved but you and I !

## O DO NOT LOVE TOO LONG

SWEETHEART, do not love too long :  
I loved long and long,  
And grew to be out of fashion  
Like an old song.

All through the years of our youth  
Neither could have known  
Their own thought from the other's,  
We were so much at one.

But, O in a minute she changed—  
O do not love too long,  
Or you will grow out of fashion  
Like an old song.

THE PLAYERS ASK FOR A BLESSING  
ON THE PSALTERIES AND ON  
THEMSELVES

*Three voices together :*

HURRY to bless the hands that play,  
The mouths that speak, the notes and  
strings,  
O masters of the glittering town !  
O ! lay the shrilly trumpet down,  
• Though drunken with the flags that  
sway  
Over the ramparts and the towers,  
And with the waving of your wings.

*First voice :*

Maybe they linger by the way.  
One gathers up his purple gown ;  
One leans and mutters by the wall—  
He dreads the weight of mortal hours.

*Second voice :*

O no, O no ! they hurry down  
Like plovers that have heard the call.



## 88 THE PLAYERS ASK A BLESSING

*Third voice :*

O kinsmen of the Three in One,  
O kinsmen bless the hands that play.  
The notes they waken shall live on  
When all this heavy history's done ;  
Our hands, our hands must ebb away.

*Three voices together :*

The proud and careless notes live on  
But bless our hands that ebb away.

## THE HAPPY TOWNLAND

THERE'S many a strong farmer  
Whose heart would break in two,  
If he could see the townland  
That we are riding to ;  
Boughs have their fruit and blossom  
At all times of the year ;  
Rivers are running over  
With red beer and brown beer.  
An old man plays the bagpipes  
In a golden and silver wood ;  
Queens, their eyes blue like the ice,  
Are dancing in a crowd.

The little fox he murmured,  
“ O what of the world's bane ? ”  
The sun was laughing sweetly,  
The moon plucked at my rein ;  
But the little red fox murmured,  
“ O do not pluck at his rein,  
He is riding to the townland  
That is the world's bane.”

When their hearts are so high  
That they would come to blows,

They unhook their heavy swords  
From golden and silver boughs ;  
But all that are killed in battle  
Awaken to life again.  
It is lucky that their story  
Is not known among men,  
For O, the strong farmers  
That would let the spade lie,  
Their hearts would be like a cup  
That somebody had drunk dry.

The little fox he murmured,  
“ O what of the world’s bane ? ”  
The sun was laughing sweetly,  
The moon plucked at my rein ;  
But the little red fox murmured,  
“ O do not pluck at his rein,  
He is riding to the townland  
That is the world’s bane.”

Michael will unhook his trumpet  
From a bough overhead,  
And blow a little noise  
When the supper has been spread.  
Gabriel will come from the water  
With a fish tail, and talk  
Of wonders that have happened  
On wet roads where men walk,  
And lift up an old horn  
Of hammered silver, and drink

Till he has fallen asleep  
Upon the starry brink.

The little fox he murmured,  
“ O what of the world’s bane ? ”  
The sun was laughing sweetly,  
The moon plucked at my rein ;  
But the little red fox murmured,  
“ O do not pluck at his rein,  
He is riding to the townland  
That is the world’s bane.”



THE SHADOWY WATERS  
(1906)

TO  
LADY GREGORY

*I WALKED among the seven woods of Coole,  
Shan-walla, where a willow-bordered pond  
Gathers the wild duck from the winter dawn;  
Shady Kyle-dortha; sunnier Kyle-na-gno,  
Where many hundred squirrels are as happy  
As though they had been hidden by green boughs,  
Where old age cannot find them; Pairc-na-lea,  
Where hazel and ash and privet blind the paths;  
Dim Pairc-na-carraig, where the wild bees fling  
Their sudden fragrances on the green air;  
Dim Pairc-na-tarav, where enchanted eyes  
Have seen immortal, mild, proud shadows  
walk;*

*Dim Inchy wood, that hides badger and fox  
And marten-cat, and borders that old wood  
Wise Biddy Early called the wicked wood:  
Seven odours, seven murmurs, seven woods.  
I had not eyes like those enchanted eyes,  
Yet dreamed that beings happier than men  
Moved round me in the shadows, and at night  
My dreams were cloven by voices and by fires;  
And the images I have woven in this story  
Of Forgael and Dectora and the empty waters  
Moved round me in the voices and the fires,  
And more I may not write of, for they that cleave  
The waters of sleep can make a chattering tongue*



*Heavy like stone, their wisdom being half silence.  
How shall I name you, immortal, mild, proud  
                  shadows?*

*I only know that all we know comes from you,  
And that you come from Eden on flying feet.  
Is Eden far away, or do you hide  
From human thought, as hares and mice and  
                  coney*

*That run before the reaping-hook and lie  
In the last ridge of the barley? Do our woods  
And winds and ponds cover more quiet woods,  
More shining winds, more star-glimmering  
                  ponds?*

*Is Eden out of time and out of space?  
And do you gather about us when pale light  
Shining on water and fallen among leaves,  
And winds blowing from flowers, and whirr of  
                  feathers  
And the green quiet, have uplifted the heart?*

*I have made this poem for you, that men may  
                  read it  
Before they read of Forgael and Dectora,  
As men in the old times, before the harps began,  
Poured out wine for the high invisible ones.*

*September 1900.*

## THE HARP OF AENGUS

*EDAIN came out of Midher's hill, and lay  
Beside young Aengus in his tower of glass,  
Where time is drowned in odour-laden winds  
And druid moons, and murmuring of boughs,  
And sleepy boughs, and boughs where apples  
made*

*Of opal and ruby and pale chrysolite  
Awake unsleeping fires ; and wove seven strings,  
Sweet with all music, out of his long hair,  
Because her hands had been made wild by love.  
When Midher's wife had changed her to a fly,  
He made a harp with druid apple wood  
That she among her winds might know he  
wept ;  
And from that hour he has watched over none  
But faithful lovers.*

*PERSONS IN THE PLAY*

FORGAEL

AIBRIC

SAILORS

DECTORA

## THE SHADOWY WATERS

*The deck of an ancient ship. At the right of the stage is the mast, with a large square sail hiding a great deal of the sky and sea on that side. The tiller is at the left of the stage; it is a long oar coming through an opening in the bulwark. The deck rises in a series of steps behind the tiller, and the stern of the ship curves overhead. When the play opens there are four persons upon the deck. AIBRIC stands by the tiller. FORGAEL sleeps upon the raised portion of the deck towards the front of the stage. Two SAILORS are standing near to the mast, on which a harp is hanging.*

### FIRST SAILOR

Has he not led us into these waste seas  
For long enough?

### SECOND SAILOR

Aye, long and long enough.

### FIRST SAILOR

We have not come upon a shore or ship  
These dozen weeks.

## 100 THE SHADOWY WATERS

### SECOND SAILOR

And I had thought to make  
A good round sum upon this cruise, and  
turn—  
For I am getting on in life—to something  
That has less ups and downs than robbery.

### FIRST SAILOR

I am so tired of being bachelor  
I could give all my heart to that Red Moll  
That had but the one eye.

### SECOND SAILOR

Can no bewitchment  
Transform these rascal billows into women  
That I may drown myself?

### FIRST SAILOR

Better steer home,  
Whether he will or no; and better still  
To take him while he sleeps and carry him  
And drop him from the gunnel.

### SECOND SAILOR

I dare not do it.  
Were't not that there is magic in his harp,

## THE SHADOWY WATERS 101

I would be of your mind ; but when he  
    plays it  
Strange creatures flutter up before one's eyes,  
Or cry about one's ears.

FIRST SAILOR

Nothing to fear.

SECOND SAILOR

Do you remember when we sank that galley  
At the full moon ?

FIRST SAILOR

He played all through the night.

SECOND SAILOR

Until the moon had set ; and when I looked  
Where the dead drifted, I could see a bird  
Like a grey gull upon the breast of each.  
While I was looking they rose hurriedly,  
And after circling with strange cries awhile  
Flew westward ; and many a time since then  
I've heard a rustling overhead in the wind.

FIRST SAILOR

I saw them on that night as well as you.  
But when I had eaten and drunk myself  
    asleep  
My courage came again.

102 THE SHADOWY WATERS

SECOND SAILOR

But that's not all.  
The other night, while he was playing it,  
A beautiful young man and girl came up  
In a white, breaking wave ; they had the look  
Of those that are alive for ever and ever.

FIRST SAILOR

I saw them, too, one night. Forgael was  
playing,  
And they were listening there beyond the sail.  
He could not see them, but I held out my  
hands  
To grasp the woman.

SECOND SAILOR

You have dared to touch her ?

FIRST SAILOR

O, she was but a shadow, and slipped from  
me.

SECOND SAILOR

But were you not afraid ?

FIRST SAILOR

Why should I fear ?

## THE SHADOWY WATERS 103

### SECOND SAILOR

'Twas Aengus and Edain, the wandering  
lovers,  
To whom all lovers pray.

### FIRST SAILOR

But what of that ?  
A shadow does not carry sword or spear.

### SECOND SAILOR

My mother told me that there is not one  
Of the Ever-living half so dangerous  
As that wild Aengus. Long before her day  
He carried Edain off from a king's house,  
And hid her among fruits of jewel-stone  
And in a tower of glass, and from that day  
Has hated every man that's not in love,  
And has been dangerous to him.

### FIRST SAILOR

I have heard  
He does not hate seafarers as he hates  
Peaceable men that shut the wind away,  
And keep to the one weary marriage-bed.

### SECOND SAILOR

I think that he has Forgael in his net,  
And drags him through the sea.



FIRST SAILOR

Well, net or none,  
I'd drown him while we have the chance to  
do it.

SECOND SAILOR

It's certain I'd sleep easier o' nights  
If he were dead ; but who will be our  
captain,  
Judge of the stars, and find a course for us ?

FIRST SAILOR

I've thought of that. We must have Aibric  
with us,  
For he can judge the stars as well as Forgael.  
[*Going towards AIBRIC.*  
Become our captain, Aibric. I am resolved  
To make an end of Forgael while he sleeps.  
There's not a man but will be glad of it  
When it is over, nor one to grumble at us.

AIBRIC

You have taken pay and made your bargain  
for it.

FIRST SAILOR

What good is there in this hard way of  
living,  
Unless we drain more flagons in a year

## THE SHADOWY WATERS 105

And kiss more lips than lasting peaceable  
men  
In their long lives? Will you be of our  
troop  
And take the captain's share of everything  
And bring us into populous seas again?

### AIBRIC

Be of your troop! Aibric be one of you  
And Forgael in the other scale! kill Forgael,  
And he my master from my childhood up!  
If you will draw that sword out of its scabbard  
I'll give my answer.

### FIRST SAILOR

You have awaked him.  
[To SECOND SAILOR.  
We'd better go, for we have lost this chance.  
[*They go out.*

### FORGAEL

Have the birds passed us? I could hear  
your voice.  
But there were others.

### AIBRIC

I have seen nothing pass.

FORGAEL

You're certain of it? I never wake from  
 sleep  
 But that I am afraid they may have passed,  
 For they're my only pilots. If I lost them  
 Straying too far into the north or south,  
 I'd never come upon the happiness  
 That has been promised me. I have not  
 seen them  
 These many days; and yet there must be  
 many  
 Dying at every moment in the world,  
 And flying towards their peace.

AIBRIC

Put by these thoughts,  
 And listen to me for awhile. The sailors  
 Are plotting for your death.

FORGAEL

Have I not given  
 More riches than they ever hoped to find?  
 And now they will not follow, while I seek  
 The only riches that have hit my fancy.

AIBRIC

What riches can you find in this waste sea  
 Where no ship sails, where nothing that's  
 alive

THE SHADOWY WATERS 107

Has ever come but those man-headed birds,  
Knowing it for the world's end ?

FORGAEL

Where the world ends  
The mind is made unchanging, for it finds  
Miracle, ecstasy, the impossible hope,  
The flagstone under all, the fire of fires,  
The roots of the world.

AIBRIC

Who knows that shadows  
May not have driven you mad for their own  
sport ?

FORGAEL

Do you, too, doubt me ? Have you joined  
their plot ?

AIBRIC

No, no, do not say that. You know right  
well  
That I will never lift a hand against you.

FORGAEL

Why should you be more faithful than the  
rest,  
Being as doubtful ?

AIBRIC

I have called you master  
Too many years to lift a hand against you.

FORGAEL

Maybe it is but natural to doubt me.  
You've never known, I'd lay a wager on it,  
A melancholy that a cup of wine,  
A lucky battle, or a woman's kiss  
Could not amend.

AIBRIC

I have good spirits enough.

FORGAEL

If you will give me all your mind awhile—  
All, all, the very bottom of the bowl—  
I'll show you that I am made differently,  
That nothing can amend it but these  
waters,  
Where I am rid of life—the events of the  
world—  
What do you call it?—that old promise-  
breaker,  
The cozening fortune-teller that comes  
whispering,  
“You will have all you have wished for  
when you have earned  
Land for your children or money in a pot.”

THE SHADOWY WATERS 109

And when we have it we are no happier,  
Because of that old draught under the  
door,  
Or creaky shoes. And at the end of all  
How are we better off than Seaghan the  
fool,  
That never did a hand's turn? Aibric!  
Aibric!  
We have fallen in the dreams the Ever-living  
Breathe on the burnished mirror of the  
world,  
And then smooth out with ivory hands and  
sigh,  
And find their laughter sweeter to the taste  
For that brief sighing.

AIBRIC

If you had loved some woman—

FORGAEL

You say that also? You have heard the  
voices,  
For that is what they say—all, all the  
shadows—  
Aengus and Edain, those passionate wan-  
derers,  
And all the others; but it must be love  
As they have known it. Now the secret's  
out;  
For it is love that I am seeking for,

110 THE SHADOWY WATERS

But of a beautiful, unheard-of kind  
That is not in the world.

AIBRIC

And yet the world  
Has beautiful women to please every man.

FORGAEL

But he that gets their love after the fashion  
Loves in brief longing and deceiving hope  
And bodily tenderness, and finds that even  
The bed of love, that in the imagination  
Had seemed to be the giver of all peace,  
Is no more than a wine-cup in the tasting,  
And as soon finished.

AIBRIC

All that ever loved  
Have loved that way—there is no other way.

FORGAEL

Yet never have two lovers kissed but they  
Believed there was some other near at hand,  
And almost wept because they could not  
find it.

AIBRIC

When they have twenty years ; in middle life  
They take a kiss for what a kiss is worth,  
And let the dream go by.

## THE SHADOWY WATERS III

# FORGAEL

It's not a dream,  
But the reality that makes our passion  
As a lamp shadow—no—no lamp, the sun.  
What the world's million lips are thirsting  
for,  
Must be substantial somewhere.

AIBRIC

I have heard the Druids  
Mutter such things as they awake from  
trance.  
It may be that the Ever-living know it—  
No mortal can.

FORGAEL

Yes ; if they give us help.

AIBRIC

They are besotting you as they besot  
The crazy herdsman that will tell his fellows  
That he has been all night upon the hills,  
Riding to hurley, or in the battle-host  
With the Ever-living.

FORGAEL

What if he speak the truth,  
And for a dozen hours have been a part  
Of that more powerful life?



## 112 THE SHADOWY WATERS

AIBRIC

His wife knows better.  
Has she not seen him lying like a log,  
Or fumbling in a dream about the house?  
And if she hear him mutter of wild riders,  
She knows that it was but the cart-horse  
coughing  
That set him to the fancy.

FORGAEL

All would be well  
Could we but give us wholly to the dreams,  
And get into their world that to the sense  
Is shadow, and not linger wretchedly  
Among substantial things; for it is dreams  
That lift us to the flowing, changing world  
That the heart longs for. What is love itself,  
Even though it be the lightest of light love,  
But dreams that hurry from beyond the  
world  
To make low laughter more than meat and  
drink,  
Though it but set us sighing? Fellow-  
wanderer,  
Could we but mix ourselves into a dream,  
Not in its image on the mirror!

AIBRIC

While  
We're in the body that's impossible.

## THE SHADOWY WATERS 113

### FORGAEL

And yet I cannot think they're leading me  
To death ; for they that promised to me love  
As those that can outlive the moon have  
known it,

Had the world's total life gathered up, it  
seemed,

Into their shining limbs—I've had great  
teachers.

Aengus and Edain ran up out of the wave—  
You'd never doubt that it was life they  
promised

Had you looked on them face to face as I did,  
With so red lips, and running on such feet,  
And having such wide-open, shining eyes.

### AIBRIC

It's certain they are leading you to death.  
None but the dead, or those that never lived,  
Can know that ecstasy. Forgael ! Forgael !  
They have made you follow the man-headed  
birds,

And you have told me that their journey lies  
Towards the country of the dead.

### FORGAEL

What matter

If I am going to my death, for there,  
Or somewhere, I shall find the love they  
have promised.

114 THE SHADOWY WATERS

That much is certain. I shall find a woman,  
One of the Ever-living, as I think—  
One of the Laughing People—and she and I  
Shall light upon a place in the world's core,  
Where passion grows to be a changeless thing,  
Like charmed apples made of chrysoprase,  
Or chrysoberyl, or beryl, or chrysolite ;  
And there, in juggleries of sight and sense,  
Become one movement, energy, delight,  
Until the overburthened moon is dead.

[*A number of SAILORS enter hurriedly.*]

FIRST SAILOR

Look there ! there in the mist ! a ship of  
spice !  
And we are almost on her !

SECOND SAILOR

We had not known  
But for the ambergris and sandalwood.

FIRST SAILOR

No ; but opoponax and cinnamon.

FORGAEL

[*Taking the tiller from AIBRIC*]

The Ever-living have kept my bargain for me,  
And paid you on the nail.

## THE SHADOWY WATERS 115

AIBRIC

Take up that rope  
To make her fast while we are plundering  
her.

FIRST SAILOR

There is a king and queen upon her deck,  
And where there is one woman there'll be  
others.

AIBRIC

Speak lower, or they'll hear.

FIRST SAILOR

They cannot hear ;  
They are too busy with each other. Look !  
He has stooped down and kissed her on the  
lips.

SECOND SAILOR

When she finds out we have better men  
aboard  
She may not be too sorry in the end.

FIRST SAILOR

She will be like a wild cat ; for these queens  
Care more about the kegs of silver and gold  
And the high fame that come to them in  
marriage,  
Than a strong body and a ready hand.

116 THE SHADOWY WATERS

SECOND SAILOR

There's nobody is natural but a robber,  
And that is why the world totters about  
Upon its bandy legs.

AIBRIC

Run at them now,  
And overpower the crew while yet asleep !  
[*The SAILORS go out.*  
*[Voices and the clashing of swords are*  
*heard from the other ship, which*  
*cannot be seen because of the sail.*

A VOICE

Armed men have come upon us ! O, I am  
slain !

ANOTHER VOICE

Wake all below !

ANOTHER VOICE

Why have you broken our sleep ?

FIRST VOICE

Armed men have come upon us ! O, I am  
slain !

## THE SHADOWY WATERS 117

FORGAEL

*[Who has remained at the tiller]*

There ! there they come ! Gull, gannet, or  
diver,

But with a man's head, or a fair woman's,  
They hover over the masthead awhile  
To wait their friends ; but when their  
friends have come

They'll fly upon that secret way of theirs.  
One—and one—a couple—five together ;  
And I will hear them talking in a minute.  
Yes, voices ! but I do not catch the words.  
Now I can hear. There's one of them that  
says :

“ How light we are, now we are changed to  
birds ! ”

Another answers : “ Maybe we shall find  
Our heart's desire now that we are so light.”  
And then one asks another how he died,  
And says : “ A sword-blade pierced me in  
my sleep.”

And now they all wheel suddenly and fly  
To the other side, and higher in the air.  
And now a laggard with a woman's head  
Comes crying, “ I have run upon the sword.  
I have fled to my beloved in the air,  
In the waste of the high air, that we may  
wander

Among the windy meadows of the dawn.”  
But why are they still waiting ? why are they

118 THE SHADOWY WATERS

Circling and circling over the masthead ?  
What power that is more mighty than desire  
To hurry to their hidden happiness  
Withholds them now ? Have the Ever-  
living Ones  
A meaning in that circling overhead ?  
But what's the meaning ? [*He cries out.*]  
Why do you linger there ?  
Why do you not run to your desire,  
Now that you have happy winged bodies ?  
[*His voice sinks again.*  
Being too busy in the air and the high air,  
They cannot hear my voice ; but what's the  
meaning ?  
[*The SAILORS have returned. DECTORA is with them.*

FORGAEL

[*Turning and seeing her*]  
Why are you standing with your eyes upon  
me ?  
You are not the world's core. O no, no, no !  
That cannot be the meaning of the birds.  
You are not its core. My teeth are in the  
world,  
But have not bitten yet.

DECTORA

I am a queen,  
And ask for satisfaction upon these

THE SHADOWY WATERS 119

Who have slain my husband and laid hands  
upon me.

[*Breaking loose from the SAILORS who  
are holding her.*]

Let go my hands !

FORGAEL

Why do you cast a shadow ?

Where do you come from ? Who brought  
you to this place ?

They would not send me one that casts a  
shadow.

DECTORA

Would that the storm that overthrew my  
ships,

And drowned the treasures of nine conquered  
nations,

And blew me hither to my lasting sorrow,  
Had drowned me also. But, being yet alive,  
I ask a fitting punishment for all  
That raised their hands against him.

FORGAEL

There are some  
That weigh and measure all in these waste  
seas—

They that have all the wisdom that's in life,  
And all that prophesying images  
Made of dim gold rave out in secret tombs ;



120 THE SHADOWY WATERS

They have it that the plans of kings and  
    queens  
Are dust on the moth's wing ; that nothing  
    matters  
But laughter and tears—laughter, laughter,  
    and tears ;  
That every man should carry his own soul  
Upon his shoulders.

DECTORA

    You've nothing but wild words,  
And I would know if you will give me  
    vengeance.

FORGAEL

When she finds out I will not let her go—  
When she knows that.

DECTORA

    What is it that you are muttering—  
That you'll not let me go ? I am a queen.

FORGAEL

Although you are more beautiful than any,  
I almost long that it were possible ;  
But if I were to put you on that ship,  
With sailors that were sworn to do your will,  
And you had spread a sail for home, a wind  
Would rise of a sudden, or a wave so huge,

## THE SHADOWY WATERS 121

It had washed among the stars and put them  
out,  
And beat the bulwark of your ship on mine,  
Until you stood before me on the deck—  
As now.

DECTORA

Does wandering in these desolate seas  
And listening to the cry of wind and wave  
Bring madness ?

FORGAEL

Queen, I am not mad.

DECTORA

And yet you say the water and the wind  
Would rise against me.

FORGAEL

No, I am not mad—  
If it be not that hearing messages  
From lasting watchers, that outlive the moon,  
At the most quiet midnight is to be stricken.

DECTORA

And did those watchers bid you take me  
captive ?

FORGAEL

Both you and I are taken in the net.  
It was their hands that plucked the winds  
awake

## 122 THE SHADOWY WATERS

And blew you hither ; and their mouths  
    have promised  
I shall have love in their immortal fashion ;  
And for this end they gave me my old harp  
That is more mighty than the sun and moon,  
Or than the shivering casting-net of the  
    stars,  
That none might take you from me.

### DECTORA

*[First trembling back from the mast where the  
    harp is, and then laughing]*

For a moment  
Your raving of a message and a harp  
More mighty than the stars half troubled me,  
But all that's raving. Who is there can  
    compel  
The daughter and the granddaughter of kings  
To be his bedfellow ?

### FORGAEL

Until your lips  
Have called me their beloved, I'll not kiss  
    them.

### DECTORA

My husband and my king died at my feet,  
And yet you talk of love.

## THE SHADOWY WATERS 123

FORGAEL

The movement of time  
Is shaken in these seas, and what one does  
One moment has no might upon the moment  
That follows after.

DECTORA

I understand you now.  
You have a Druid craft of wicked sound  
Wrung from the cold women of the sea—  
A magic that can call a demon up,  
Until my body give you kiss for kiss.

FORGAEL

Your soul shall give the kiss.

DECTORA

I am not afraid,  
While there's a rope to run into a noose  
Or wave to drown. But I have done with  
words,  
And I would have you look into my face  
And know that it is fearless.

FORGAEL

Do what you will,  
For neither I nor you can break a mesh  
Of the great golden net that is about us.

DECTORA

There's nothing in the world that's worth  
a fear.

*[She passes FORGAEL and stands for a  
moment looking into his face.]*

I have good reason for that thought.

*[She runs suddenly on to the raised  
part of the poop.]*

And now  
I can put fear away as a queen should.

*[She mounts on to the bulwark and  
turns towards FORGAEL.]*

Fool, fool ! Although you have looked into  
my face

You do not see my purpose. I shall have  
gone

Before a hand can touch me.

FORGAEL

*[Folding his arms]*

My hands are still ;  
The Ever-living hold us. Do what you will,  
You cannot leap out of the golden net.

FIRST SAILOR

No need to drown, for, if you will pardon us  
And measure out a course and bring us home,  
We'll put this man to death.

THE SHADOWY WATERS 125

DECTORA

I promise it.

FIRST SAILOR

There is none to take his side.

AIBRIC

I am on his side.

I'll strike a blow for him to give him time  
To cast his dreams away.

[AIBRIC goes in front of FORGAEL  
with drawn sword. FORGAEL  
takes the harp.]

FIRST SAILOR

No other 'll do it.

[The SAILORS throw AIBRIC on one  
side. He falls and lies upon  
the deck. They lift their swords  
to strike FORGAEL, who is about  
to play the harp. The stage  
begins to darken. The SAILORS  
hesitate in fear.]

SECOND SAILOR

He has put a sudden darkness over the moon.

DECTORA

Nine swords with handles of rhinoceros horn  
To him that strikes him first !

FIRST SAILOR

I will strike him first.

[*He goes close up to FORGAEL with his sword lifted.*

[*Shrinking back.*] He has caught the crescent moon out of the sky,  
And carries it between us.

SECOND SAILOR

Holy fire

To burn us to the marrow if we strike.

DECTORA

I'll give a golden galley full of fruit,  
That has the heady flavour of new wine,  
To him that wounds him to the death.

FIRST SAILOR

I'll do it.

For all his spells will vanish when he dies,  
Having their life in him.

SECOND SAILOR

Though it be the moon

That he is holding up between us there,  
I will strike at him.

THE OTHERS

And I ! And I ! And I !

[FORGAEL *plays the harp.*

## THE SHADOWY WATERS 127

### FIRST SAILOR

*[Falling into a dream suddenly]*

But you were saying there is somebody  
Upon that other ship we are to wake.  
You did not know what brought him to his  
    end,  
But it was sudden.

### SECOND SAILOR

    You are in the right ;  
I had forgotten that we must go wake him.

### DECTORA

He has flung a Druid spell upon the air,  
And set you dreaming.

### SECOND SAILOR

    How can we have a wake  
When we have neither brown nor yellow  
    ale ?

### FIRST SAILOR

I saw a flagon of brown ale aboard her.

### THIRD SAILOR

How can we raise the keen that do not know  
What name to call him by ?



FIRST SAILOR

Come to his ship.  
His name will come into our thoughts in a  
minute.  
I know that he died a thousand years ago,  
And has not yet been waked.

SECOND SAILOR

[*Beginning to keen*]  
Ohone! O! O! O!  
The yew bough has been broken into two,  
And all the birds are scattered.

ALL THE SAILORS

O! O! O! O!  
[*They go out keening.*]

DECTORA

Protect me now, gods, that my people swear by.  
[*AIBRIC has risen from the deck  
where he had fallen. He has  
begun looking for his sword as  
if in a dream.*]

AIBRIC

Where is my sword that fell out of my hand  
When I first heard the news? Ah, there it is!  
[*He goes dreamily towards the sword,  
but DECTORA runs at it and takes  
it up before he can reach it.*]

AIBRIC [*sleepily*]

Queen, give it me.

DECTORA

No, I have need of it.

AIBRIC

Why do you need a sword? But you may  
keep it,  
Now that he's dead I have no need of it,  
For everything is gone.

A SAILOR

[*Calling from the other ship*]

Come hither, Aibric,  
And tell me who it is that we are waking.

AIBRIC

[*Half to DECTORA, half to himself*]

What name had that dead king? Arthur of  
Britain?

No, no—not Arthur. I remember now.

It was golden-armed Iollan, and he died

Broken-hearted, having lost his queen

Through wicked spells. That is not all the  
tale,

For he was killed. O! O! O! O! O! O!

For golden-armed Iollan has been killed.

[*He goes out.*  
*[While he has been speaking, and*  
*through part of what follows, one*  
*hears the wailing of the SAILORS*  
*from the other ship. DECTORA*  
*stands with the sword lifted in*  
*front of FORGAEL.*

DECTORA

I will end all your magic on the instant.

[*Her voice becomes dreamy, and she*  
*lowers the sword slowly, and*  
*finally lets it fall. She spreads*  
*out her hair. She takes off her*  
*crown and lays it upon the deck.*

This sword is to lie beside him in the grave.  
 It was in all his battles. I will spread my  
 hair,

And wring my hands, and wail him bitterly,  
 For I have heard that he was proud and  
 laughing,

Blue-eyed, and a quick runner on bare feet,  
 And that he died a thousand years ago.

O! O! O!

[*FORGAEL changes the tune.*

But no, that is not it.

I knew him well, and while I heard him  
 laughing

They killed him at my feet. O! O! O! O!

THE SHADOWY WATERS 131

For golden-armed Iollan that I loved.  
But what is it that made me say I loved him ?  
It was that harper put it in my thoughts,  
But it is true. Why did they run upon him,  
And beat the golden helmet with their  
swords ?

FORGAEL

Do you not know me, lady ? I am he  
That you are weeping for.

DECTORA

No, for he is dead.  
O ! O ! O ! for golden-armed Iollan.

FORGAEL

It was so given out, but I will prove  
That the grave-diggers in a dreamy frenzy  
Have buried nothing but my golden arms.  
Listen to that low-laughing string of the  
moon

And you will recollect my face and voice,  
For you have listened to me playing it  
These thousand years.

*[He starts up, listening to the birds.  
The harp slips from his hands,  
and remains leaning against the  
bulwarks behind him.]*

What are the birds at there ?

132 THE SHADOWY WATERS

Why are they all a-flutter of a sudden ?  
What are you calling out above the mast ?  
If railing and reproach and mockery  
Because I have awakened her to love  
My magic strings, I'll make this answer to  
it :

Being driven on by voices and by dreams  
That were clear messages from the Ever-  
living,  
I have done right. What could I but obey ?  
And yet you make a clamour of reproach.

DECTORA [*laughing*]

Why, it's a wonder out of reckoning  
That I should keen him from the full of the  
moon  
To the horn, and he be hale and hearty.

FORGAEL

How have I wronged her now that she is  
merry ?  
But no, no, no ! your cry is not against me.  
You know the councils of the Ever-living,  
And all that tossing of your wings is joy,  
And all that murmuring's but a marriage  
song ;  
But if it be reproach, I answer this :  
There is not one among you that made love  
By any other means. You call it passion,

Consideration, generosity ;  
But it was all deceit, and flattery  
To win a woman in her own despite,  
For love is war, and there is hatred in it ;  
And if you say that she came willingly—

DECTORA

Why do you turn away and hide your face,  
That I would look upon for ever ?

FORGAEL

My grief.

DECTORA

Have I not loved you for a thousand years ?

FORGAEL

I never have been golden-armed Iollan.

DECTORA

I do not understand. I know your face  
Better than my own hands.

FORGAEL

I have deceived you  
Out of all reckoning.

DECTORA

Is it not true  
That you were born a thousand years ago,  
In islands where the children of Aengus wind  
In happy dances under a windy moon,  
And that you'll bring me there ?

FORGAEL

I have deceived you ;  
I have deceived you utterly.

DECTORA

How can that be ?  
Is it that though your eyes are full of love  
Some other woman has a claim on you,  
And I've but half ?

FORGAEL

Oh, no !

DECTORA

And if there is,  
If there be half a hundred more, what  
matter ?  
I'll never give another thought to it ;  
No, no, nor half a thought ; but do not speak.  
Women are hard and proud and stubborn-  
hearted,

## THE SHADOWY WATERS 135

Their heads being turned with praise and  
flattery ;  
And that is why their lovers are afraid  
To tell them a plain story.

FORGAEL

That's not the story ;  
But I have done so great a wrong against  
you,  
There is no measure that it would not burst.  
I will confess it all.

DECTORA

What do I care,  
Now that my body has begun to dream,  
And you have grown to be a burning sod  
In the imagination and intellect ?  
If something that's most fabulous were true—  
If you had taken me by magic spells,  
And killed a lover or husband at my feet—  
I would not let you speak, for I would know  
That it was yesterday and not to-day  
I loved him ; I would cover up my ears,  
As I am doing now. [*A pause.*] Why do  
you weep ?

FORGAEL

I weep because I've nothing for your eyes  
But desolate waters and a battered ship.



136 THE SHADOWY WATERS

DECTORA

O, why do you not lift your eyes to mine ?

FORGAEL

I weep—I weep because bare night's above,  
And not a roof of ivory and gold.

DECTORA

I would grow jealous of the ivory roof,  
And strike the golden pillars with my hands.  
I would that there was nothing in the world  
But my beloved—that night and day had  
perished,  
And all that is and all that is to be,  
All that is not the meeting of our lips.

FORGAEL

You turn away. Why do you turn away ?  
Am I to fear the waves, or is the moon  
My enemy ?

DECTORA

I looked upon the moon,  
Longing to knead and pull it into shape  
That I might lay it on your head as a crown.  
But now it is your thoughts that wander  
away,  
For you are looking at the sea. Do you not  
know

THE SHADOWY WATERS 137

How great a wrong it is to let one's thought  
Wander a moment when one is in love ?

*[He has moved away. She follows  
him. He is looking out over the  
sea, shading his eyes.]*

Why are you looking at the sea ?

FORGAEL

Look there !

DECTORA

What is there but a troop of ash-grey birds  
That fly into the west ?

FORGAEL

But listen, listen !

DECTORA

What is there but the crying of the birds ?

FORGAEL

If you'll but listen closely to that crying  
You'll hear them calling out to one another  
With human voices.

DECTORA

O, I can hear them now.  
What are they ? Unto what country do  
they fly ?

FORGAEL

To unimaginable happiness.  
 They have been circling over our heads in  
     the air,  
 But now that they have taken to the road  
 We have to follow, for they are our pilots ;  
 And though they're but the colour of grey  
     ash,  
 They're crying out, could you but hear their  
     words,  
 " There is a country at the end of the world  
 Where no child's born but to outlive the  
     moon."

[*The SAILORS come in with AIBRIC.*  
*They are in great excitement.*

FIRST SAILOR

The hold is full of treasure.

SECOND SAILOR

Full to the hatches.

FIRST SAILOR

Treasure on treasure.

THIRD SAILOR

Boxes of precious spice.

## FIRST SAILOR

Ivory images with amethyst eyes.

### THIRD SAILOR

Dragons with eyes of ruby.

## FIRST SAILOR

The whole ship  
Flashes as if it were a net of herrings.

THIRD SAILOR

Let's home ; I'd give some rubies to a  
woman.

## SECOND SAILOR

There's somebody I'd give the amethyst  
eyes to.

## AIBRIC

[*Silencing them with a gesture*]

We would return to our own country,  
 Forgael,  
 For we have found a treasure that's so great  
 Imagination cannot reckon it.

140 THE SHADOWY WATERS

And having lit upon this woman there,  
What more have you to look for on the seas ?

FORGAEL

I cannot—I am going on to the end.  
As for this woman, I think she is coming  
with me.

AIBRIC

The Ever-living have made you mad ; but  
no,  
It was this woman in her woman's vengeance  
That drove you to it, and I fool enough  
To fancy that she'd bring you home again.  
'Twas you that egged him to it, for you know  
That he is being driven to his death.

DECTORA

That is not true, for he has promised me  
An unimaginable happiness.

AIBRIC

And if that happiness be more than dreams,  
More than the froth, the feather, the dust-  
whirl,  
The crazy nothing that I think it is,  
It shall be in the country of the dead,  
If there be such a country.

## THE SHADOWY WATERS 141

DECTORA

No, not there,  
But in some island where the life of the  
world  
Leaps upward, as if all the streams o' the  
world  
Had run into one fountain.

AIBRIC

Speak to him.  
He knows that he is taking you to death ;  
Speak—he will not deny it.

DECTORA

Is that true ?

FORGAEL

I do not know for certain, but I know  
That I have the best of pilots.

AIBRIC

Shadows, illusions,  
That the Shape-changers, the Ever-laughing  
Ones,  
The Immortal Mockers have cast into his  
mind,  
Or called before his eyes.

DECTORA

O carry me  
To some sure country, some familiar place.  
Have we not everything that life can give  
In having one another ?

FORGAEL

How could I rest  
If I refused the messengers and pilots  
With all those sights and all that crying out ?

DECTORA

But I will cover up your eyes and ears,  
That you may never hear the cry of the birds,  
Or look upon them.

FORGAEL

Were they but lowlier  
I'd do your will, but they are too high—too  
high.

DECTORA

Being too high, their heady prophecies  
But harry us with hopes that come to  
nothing,  
Because we are not proud, imperishable,  
Alone and winged.

THE SHADOWY WATERS 143

FORGAEL

Our love shall be like theirs  
When we have put their changeless image  
on.

DECTORA

I am a woman, I die at every breath.

AIBRIC

Let the birds scatter for the tree is broken,  
And there's no help in words. [*To the*  
SAILORS.]

To the other ship,  
And I will follow you and cut the rope  
When I have said farewell to this man here,  
For neither I nor any living man  
Will look upon his face again.

[*The SAILORS go out.*]

FORGAEL [*to* DECTORA]

Go with him,  
For he will shelter you and bring you home.

AIBRIC

[*Taking FORGAEL's hand*]

I'll do it for his sake.



DECTORA

No. Take this sword  
And cut the rope, for I go on with Forgael.

AIBRIC

[*Half falling into the keen*]

The yew bough has been broken into two,  
And all the birds are scattered—O! O! O!  
Farewell! farewell! [*He goes out.*]

DECTORA

The sword is in the rope—  
The rope's in two—it falls into the sea,  
It whirls into the foam. O ancient worm,  
Dragon that loved the world and held us to it,  
You are broken, you are broken. The world  
drifts away,  
And I am left alone with my beloved,  
Who cannot put me from his sight for ever.  
We are alone for ever, and I laugh,  
Forgael, because you cannot put me from  
you.  
The mist has covered the heavens, and you  
and I  
Shall be alone for ever. We two—this  
crown—  
I half remember. It has been in my dreams.

THE SHADOWY WATERS 145

Bend lower, O king, that I may crown you  
with it.

O flower of the branch, O bird among the  
leaves,

O silver fish that my two hands have taken  
Out of the running stream, O morning star,  
Trembling in the blue heavens like a white  
fawn

Upon the misty border of the wood,  
Bend lower, that I may cover you with my  
hair,

For we will gaze upon this world no longer.

FORGAEL

[*Gathering DECTORA's hair about him*]

Beloved, having dragged the net about us,  
And knitted mesh to mesh, we grow  
immortal ;

And that old harp awakens of itself  
To cry aloud to the grey birds, and dreams,  
That have had dreams for father, live in us.



FROM THE GREEN HELMET  
AND OTHER POEMS  
(1912)



## HIS DREAM

I SWAYED upon the gaudy stern  
The butt end of a steering oar,  
And saw wherever I could turn  
A crowd upon a shore.

And though I would have hushed the crowd,  
There was no mother's son but said,  
"What is the figure in a shroud  
Upon a gaudy bed?"

And after running at the brim  
Cried out upon that thing beneath,  
—It had such dignity of limb—  
By the sweet name of Death.

Though I'd my finger on my lip,  
What could I but take up the song?  
And running crowd and gaudy ship  
Cried out the whole night long,

Crying amid the glittering sea,  
Naming it with ecstatic breath,  
Because it had such dignity  
By the sweet name of Death.

## A WOMAN HOMER SANG

If any man drew near  
When I was young,  
I thought, "He holds her dear,"  
And shook with hate and fear.  
But oh, 'twas bitter wrong  
If he could pass her by  
With an indifferent eye.

Whereon I wrote and wrought,  
And now, being grey,  
I dream that I have brought  
To such a pitch my thought  
That coming time can say,  
"He shadowed in a glass  
What thing her body was."

For she had fiery blood  
When I was young,  
And trod so sweetly proud  
As 'twere upon a cloud,  
A woman Homer sung,  
That life and letters seem  
But an heroic dream.

## THE CONSOLATION

I HAD this thought awhile ago,  
“ My darling cannot understand  
What I have done, or what would do  
In this blind bitter land.”

And I grew weary of the sun  
Until my thoughts cleared up again,  
Remembering that the best I have done  
Was done to make it plain ;

That every year I have cried, “ At length  
My darling understands it all,  
Because I have come into my strength,  
And words obey my call ” ;

That had she done so who can say  
What would have shaken from the sieve ?  
I might have thrown poor words away  
And been content to live.



## NO SECOND TROY

WHY should I blame her that she filled my  
days  
With misery, or that she would of late  
Have taught to ignorant men most violent  
ways,  
Or hurled the little streets upon the great,  
Had they but courage equal to desire ?  
What could have made her peaceful with a  
mind  
That nobleness made simple as a fire,  
With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind  
That is not natural in an age like this,  
Being high and solitary and most stern ?  
Why, what could she have done being what  
she is ?  
Was there another Troy for her to burn ?

## RECONCILIATION

SOME may have blamed you that you took  
away  
The verses that could move them on the  
day  
When, the ears being deafened, the sight  
of the eyes blind  
With lightning you went from me, and I  
could find  
Nothing to make a song about but kings,  
Helmets, and swords, and half-forgotten  
things  
That were like memories of you—but now  
We'll out, for the world lives as long ago ;  
And while we're in our laughing, weeping  
fit,  
Hurl helmets, crowns, and swords into the  
pit.  
But, dear, cling close to me ; since you  
were gone,  
My barren thoughts have chilled me to the  
bone.

## KING AND NO KING

“ WOULD it were anything but merely  
voice ! ”

The No King cried who after that was King,  
Because he had not heard of anything  
That balanced with a word is more than  
noise ;

Yet Old Romance being kind, let him  
prevail

Somewhere or somehow that I have forgot,  
Though he'd but cannon—Whereas we  
that had thought

To have lit upon as clean and sweet a tale  
Have been defeated by that pledge you gave  
In momentary anger long ago ;  
And I that have not your faith, how shall I  
know

That in the blinding light beyond the grave  
We'll find so good a thing as that we have  
lost ?

The hourly kindness, the day's common  
speech,

The habitual content of each with each  
When neither soul nor body has been  
crossed.

## PEACE

Ah, that Time could touch a form  
That could show what Homer's age  
Bred to be a hero's wage.  
" Were not all her life but storm,  
Would not painters paint a form  
Of such noble lines," I said,  
" Such a delicate high head,  
All that sternness amid charm,  
All that sweetness amid strength ? "  
Ah, but peace that comes at length,  
Came when Time had touched her form.

## AGAINST UNWORTHY PRAISE

O HEART, be at peace, because  
Nor knave nor dolt can break  
What's not for their applause,  
Being for a woman's sake.  
Enough if the work has seemed,  
So did she your strength renew,  
A dream that a lion had dreamed  
Till the wilderness cried aloud,  
A secret between you two,  
Between the proud and the proud.

What, still you would have their praise !  
But here's a haughtier text,  
The labyrinth of her days  
That her own strangeness perplexed ;  
And how what her dreaming gave  
Earned slander, ingratitude,  
From self-same dolt and knave ;  
Aye, and worse wrong than these.  
Yet she, singing upon her road,  
Half lion, half child, is at peace.

## THE FASCINATION OF WHAT'S DIFFICULT

THE fascination of what's difficult  
Has dried the sap out of my veins, and rent  
Spontaneous joy and natural content  
Out of my heart. There's something ails  
our colt

That must, as if it had not holy blood,  
Nor on Olympus leaped from cloud to cloud,  
Shiver under the lash, strain, sweat and jolt  
As though it dragged road metal. My  
curse on plays

That have to be set up in fifty ways,  
On the day's war with every knave and dolt,  
Theatre business, management of men.  
I swear before the dawn comes round again  
I'll find the stable and pull out the bolt.

## A DRINKING SONG

WINE comes in at the mouth  
And love comes in at the eye ;  
That's all we shall know for truth  
Before we grow old and die.  
I lift the glass to my mouth,  
I look at you, and I sigh.

THE COMING OF WISDOM  
WITH TIME

THOUGH leaves are many, the root is one ;  
Through all the lying days of my youth  
I swayed my leaves and flowers in the sun ;  
Now I may wither into the truth.



ON HEARING THAT THE STUDENTS  
OF OUR NEW UNIVERSITY HAVE  
JOINED THE AGITATION AGAINST  
IMMORAL LITERATURE

WHERE, where but here have Pride and  
Truth,  
That long to give themselves for wage,  
To shake their wicked sides at youth  
Restraining reckless middle-age.

TO A POET, WHO WOULD HAVE  
ME PRAISE CERTAIN BAD POETS,  
IMITATORS OF HIS AND MINE

You say, as I have often given tongue  
In praise of what another's said or sung,  
'Twere politic to do the like by these ;  
But was there ever dog that praised his  
fleas ?

## THE MASK

“ PUT off that mask of burning gold  
With emerald eyes.”

“ O no, my dear, you make so bold  
To find if hearts be wild and wise,  
And yet not cold.”

“ I would but find what's there to find,  
Love or deceit.”

“ It was the mask engaged your mind,  
And after set your heart to beat,  
Not what's behind.”

“ But lest you are my enemy,  
I must enquire.”

“ O no, my dear, let all that be,  
What matter, so there is but fire  
In you, in me ? ”

## UPON A HOUSE SHAKEN BY THE LAND AGITATION

How should the world be luckier if this  
house,

Where passion and precision have been one  
Time out of mind, became too ruinous  
To breed the lidless eye that loves the sun ?  
And the sweet laughing eagle thoughts that  
grow

Where wings have memory of wings, and all  
That comes of the best knit to the best ?

Although

Mean roof-trees were the sturdier for its  
fall,

How should their luck run high enough to  
reach

The gifts that govern men, and after these  
To gradual Time's last gift, a written speech  
Wrought of high laughter, loveliness and  
ease ?

## AT THE ABBEY THEATRE

*(Imitated from Ronsard)*

DEAR Craoibhin Aoibhin, look into our case.  
When we are high and airy hundreds say  
That if we hold that flight they'll leave the  
place,  
While those same hundreds mock another  
day  
Because we have made our art of common  
things,  
So bitterly, you'd dream they longed to look  
All their lives through into some drift of  
wings.  
You've dandled them and fed them from  
the book  
And know them to the bone ; impart to  
us—  
We'll keep the secret—a new trick to please.  
Is there a bridle for this Proteus  
That turns and changes like his draughty  
seas ?  
Or is there none, most popular of men,  
But when they mock us that we mock again ?

## THESE ARE THE CLOUDS

THESE are the clouds about the fallen sun,  
The majesty that shuts his burning eye :  
The weak lay hand on what the strong has  
done,

Till that be tumbled that was lifted high  
And discord follow upon unison,  
And all things at one common level lie.  
And therefore, friend, if your great race  
were run

And these things came, so much the more  
thereby

Have you made greatness your companion,  
Although it be for children that you sigh :  
These are the clouds about the fallen sun,  
The majesty that shuts his burning eye.

## AT GALWAY RACES

THERE where the course is,  
Delight makes all of the one mind,  
The riders upon the galloping horses,  
The crowd that closes in behind :  
We, too, had good attendance once,  
Hearers and hearteners of the work ;  
Aye, horsemen for companions,  
Before the merchant and the clerk  
Breathed on the world with timid breath.  
Sing on : sometime, and at some new moon,  
We'll learn that sleeping is not death,  
Hearing the whole earth change its tune,  
Its flesh being wild, and it again  
Crying aloud as the racecourse is,  
And we find hearteners among men  
That ride upon horses.

## A FRIEND'S ILLNESS

SICKNESS brought me this  
Thought, in that scale of his :  
Why should I be dismayed  
Though flame had burned the whole  
World, as it were a coal,  
Now I have seen it weighed  
Against a soul ?



## ALL THINGS CAN TEMPT ME

ALL things can tempt me from this craft of  
verse :

One time it was a woman's face, or worse—  
The seeming needs of my fool-driven land ;  
Now nothing but comes readier to the hand  
Than this accustomed toil. When I was  
young,

I had not given a penny for a song  
Did not the poet sing it with such airs  
That one believed he had a sword upstairs ;  
Yet would be now, could I but have my wish,  
Colder and dumber and deafer than a fish.

## THE YOUNG MAN'S SONG ·

I WHISPERED, " I am too young."  
And then, " I am old enough ";  
Wherefore I threw a penny  
To find out if I might love.  
" Go and love, go and love, young man,  
If the lady be young and fair."  
Ah, penny, brown penny, brown penny,  
I am looped in the loops of her hair.

Oh, love is the crooked thing,  
There is nobody wise enough  
To find out all that is in it,  
For he would be thinking of love  
Till the stars had run away,  
And the shadows eaten the moon.  
Ah, penny, brown penny, brown penny,  
One cannot begin it too soon.



RESPONSIBILITIES  
(1914)



*" In dreams begins responsibility."*

*Old Play.*

*" How am I fallen from myself, for a long time  
now*

*I have not seen the Prince of Chang in my  
dreams."*

*Khoung-fou-tseu.*



*PARDON, old fathers, if you still remain  
Somewhere in ear-shot for the story's end,  
Old Dublin merchant "free of ten and four"  
Or trading out of Galway into Spain;  
And country scholar, Robert Emmet's friend,  
A hundred-year-old memory to the poor;  
Traders or soldiers who have left me blood  
That has not passed through any huxter's loin,  
Pardon, and you that did not weigh the cost,  
Old Butlers when you took to horse and stood  
Beside the brackish waters of the Boyne  
Till your bad master blenched and all was lost;  
You merchant skipper that leaped overboard  
After a ragged hat in Biscay Bay,  
You most of all, silent and fierce old man  
Because you were the spectacle that stirred  
My fancy, and set my boyish lips to say  
"Only the wasteful virtues earn the sun";  
Pardon that for a barren passion's sake,  
Although I have come close on forty-nine  
I have no child, I have nothing but a book,  
Nothing but that to prove your blood and mine.*

*January 1914.*





## THE GREY ROCK

*Poets with whom I learned my trade,  
Companions of the Cheshire Cheese,  
Here's an old story I've re-made,  
Imagining 'twould better please  
Your ears than stories now in fashion,  
Though you may think I waste my breath  
Pretending that there can be passion  
That has more life in it than death,  
And though at bottling of your wine  
Old wholesome Goban had no say ;  
The moral's yours because it's mine.*

When cups went round at close of day—  
Is not that how good stories run ?—  
The gods were sitting at the board  
In their great house at Slievenamon,  
And sang a drowsy song, or snored,  
For all were full of wine and meat ;  
And smoky torches made a glare  
On metal Goban 'd hammered at,  
On old deep silver rolling there  
Or on some still unemptied cup  
That he, when frenzy stirred his thewes,  
Had hammered out on mountain top

To hold the sacred stuff he brews  
That only gods may buy of him.

Now from that juice that made them wise  
All those had lifted up the dim  
Imaginations of their eyes,  
For one that was like woman made  
Before their sleepy eyelids ran  
And trembling with her passion said,  
“ Come out and dig for a dead man,  
Who’s burrowing somewhere in the ground,  
And mock him to his face and then  
Hollo him on with horse and hound,  
For he is the worst of all dead men.”

*We should be dazed and terror struck,  
If we but saw in dreams that room,  
Those wine-drenched eyes, and curse our luck  
That emptied all our days to come.  
I knew a woman none could please,  
Because she dreamed when but a child  
Of men and women made like these ;  
And after, when her blood ran wild,  
Had ravelled her own story out,  
And said, “ In two or in three years  
I need must marry some poor lout,”  
And having said it burst in tears.*

*Since, tavern comrades, you have died,  
Maybe your images have stood,  
Mere bone and muscle thrown aside,*

*Before that roomful or as good.  
You had to face your ends when young—  
'Twas wine or women, or some curse—  
But never made a poorer song  
That you might have a heavier purse,  
Nor gave loud service to a cause  
That you might have a troop of friends.  
You kept the Muses' sterner laws,  
And unrepenting faced your ends,  
And therefore earned the right—and yet  
Dowson and Johnson most I praise—  
To troop with those the world's forgot,  
And copy their proud steady gaze.*

“The Danish troop was driven out  
Between the dawn and dusk,” she said ;  
“Although the event was long in doubt,  
Although the King of Ireland's dead  
And half the kings, before sundown  
All was accomplished.”

“When this day  
Murrough, the King of Ireland's son,  
Foot after foot was giving way,  
He and his best troops back to back  
Had perished there, but the Danes ran,  
Stricken with panic from the attack,  
The shouting of an unseen man ;  
And being thankful Murrough found,  
Led by a footsole dipped in blood  
That had made prints upon the ground,

Where by old thorn trees that man stood ;  
And though when he gazed here and there,  
He had but gazed on thorn trees, spoke,  
‘ Who is the friend that seems but air  
And yet could give so fine a stroke ? ’  
Thereon a young man met his eye,  
Who said, ‘ Because she held me in  
Her love, and would not have me die,  
Rock-nurtured Aoife took a pin,  
And pushing it into my shirt,  
Promised that for a pin’s sake,  
No man should see to do me hurt ;  
But there it’s gone ; I will not take  
The fortune that had been my shame  
Seeing, King’s son, what wounds you have.’  
’Twas roundly spoke, but when night came  
He had betrayed me to his grave,  
For he and the King’s son were dead.  
I’d promised him two hundred years,  
And when for all I’d done or said—  
And these immortal eyes shed tears—  
He claimed his country’s need was most,  
I’d saved his life, yet for the sake  
Of a new friend he has turned a ghost.  
What does he care if my heart break ?  
I call for spade and horse and hound  
That we may harry him.” Thereon  
She cast herself upon the ground  
And rent her clothes and made her moan :  
“ Why are they faithless when their might  
Is from the holy shades that rove

The grey rock and the windy light ?  
Why should the faithfulest heart most love  
The bitter sweetness of false faces ?  
Why must the lasting love what passes,  
Why are the gods by men betrayed ! ”

But thereon every god stood up  
With a slow smile and without sound,  
And stretching forth his arm and cup  
To where she moaned upon the ground,  
Suddenly drenched her to the skin ;  
And she with Goban's wine adrip,  
No more remembering what had been,  
Stared at the gods with laughing lip.

*I have kept my faith, though faith was tried,  
To that rock-born, rock-wandering foot,  
And the world's altered since you died,  
And I am in no good repute  
With the loud host before the sea,  
That think sword strokes were better meant  
Than lover's music—let that be,  
So that the wandering foot's content.*

## THE TWO KINGS

KING EOCHAID came at sundown to a wood  
Westward of Tara. Hurrying to his queen  
He had out-ridden his war-wasted men  
That with empounded cattle trod the mire ;  
And where beech trees had mixed a pale  
green light

With the ground-ivy's blue, he saw a stag  
Whiter than curds, its eyes the tint of the  
sea.

Because it stood upon his path and seemed  
More hands in height than any stag in the  
world

He sat with tightened rein and loosened  
mouth

Upon his trembling horse, then drove the  
spur ;

But the stag stooped and ran at him, and  
passed,

Rending the horse's flank. King Eochaid  
reeled

Then drew his sword to hold its levelled  
point

Against the stag. When horn and steel  
were met

The horn resounded as though it had been  
silver,  
A sweet, miraculous, terrifying sound.  
Horn locked in sword, they tugged and  
struggled there  
As though a stag and unicorn were met  
In Africa on Mountain of the Moon,  
Until at last the double horns, drawn back-  
ward,  
Butted below the single and so pierced  
The entrails of the horse. Dropping his  
sword  
King Eochaid seized the horns in his strong  
hands  
And stared into the sea-green eye, and so  
Hither and thither to and fro they trod  
Till all the place was beaten into mire.  
The strong thigh and the agile thigh were  
met,  
The hands that gathered up the might of  
the world,  
And hoof and horn that had sucked in their  
speed  
Amid the elaborate wilderness of the air.  
Through bush they plunged and over ivied  
root,  
And where the stone struck fire, while in  
the leaves  
A squirrel whinnied and a bird screamed out ;  
But when at last he forced those sinewy  
flanks



Against a beech bole, he threw down the  
beast

And knelt above it with drawn knife. On  
the instant

It vanished like a shadow, and a cry  
So mournful that it seemed the cry of one  
Who had lost some unimaginable treasure  
Wandered between the blue and the green  
leaf

And climbed into the air, crumbling away,  
Till all had seemed a shadow or a vision  
But for the trodden mire, the pool of blood,  
The disembowelled horse.

King Eochaid ran,  
Toward peopled Tara, nor stood to draw his  
breath

Until he came before the painted wall,  
The posts of polished yew, circled with  
bronze,

Of the great door; but though the hanging  
lamps

Showed their faint light through the un-  
shuttered windows,

Nor door, nor mouth, nor slipper made a  
noise,

Nor on the ancient beaten paths, that wound  
From well-side or from plough-land, was  
there noise;

Nor had there been the noise of living thing  
Before him or behind, but that far-off  
On the horizon edge bellowed the herds.

Knowing that silence brings no good to  
kings,

And mocks returning victory, he passed  
Between the pillars with a beating heart  
And saw where in the midst of the great hall  
Pale-faced, alone upon a bench, Edain  
Sat upright with a sword before her feet.

Her hands on either side had gripped the  
bench,

Her eyes were cold and steady, her lips  
tight.

Some passion had made her stone. Hearing  
a foot

She started and then knew whose foot it was ;  
But when he thought to take her in his arms  
She motioned him afar, and rose and spoke :  
“ I have sent among the fields or to the  
woods

The fighting men and servants of this house,  
For I would have your judgment upon one  
Who is self-accused. If she be innocent  
She would not look in any known man's face  
Till judgment has been given, and if guilty,  
Will never look again on known man's face.”  
And at these words he paled, as she had  
paled,

Knowing that he should find upon her lips  
The meaning of that monstrous day.

Then she :

“ You brought me where your brother Ardan  
sat

Always in his one seat, and bid me care him  
Through that strange illness that had fixed  
him there,

And should he die to heap his burial mound  
And carve his name in Ogham." Eochaid  
said,

"He lives?" "He lives and is a healthy  
man."

"While I have him and you it matters little  
What man you have lost, what evil you have  
found."

"I bid them make his bed under this roof  
And carried him his food with my own  
hands,

And so the weeks passed by. But when I  
said

'What is this trouble?' he would answer  
nothing,

Though always at my words his trouble  
grew ;

And I but asked the more, till he cried out,  
Weary of many questions : 'There are  
things

That make the heart akin to the dumb  
stone.'

Then I replied : 'Although you hide a  
secret,

Hopeless and dear, or terrible to think on,  
Speak it, that I may send through the wide  
world

For medicine.' Thereon he cried aloud :

‘ Day after day you question me, and I,  
Because there is such a storm amid my  
thoughts

I shall be carried in the gust, command,  
Forbid, beseech and waste my breath.’

Then I,

‘ Although the thing that you have hid were  
evil,

The speaking of it could be no great wrong,  
And evil must it be, if done ’twere worse  
Than mound and stone that keep all virtue  
in,

And loosen on us dreams that waste our  
life,

Shadows and shows that can but turn the  
brain.’

But finding him still silent I stooped down  
And whispering that none but he should  
hear,

Said : ‘ If a woman has put this on you,  
My men, whether it please her or displease,  
And though they have to cross the Loughlan  
waters

And take her in the middle of armed men,  
Shall make her look upon her handiwork,  
That she may quench the rick she has fired ;  
and though

She may have worn silk clothes, or worn a  
crown,

She’ll not be proud, knowing within her  
heart

That our sufficient portion of the world  
Is that we give, although it be brief giving,  
Happiness to children and to men.'  
Then he, driven by his thought beyond his  
thought,  
And speaking what he would not though he  
would,  
Sighed : ' You, even you yourself, could  
work the cure ! '  
And at those words I rose and I went out  
And for nine days he had food from other  
hands,  
And for nine days my mind went whirling  
round  
The one disastrous zodiac, muttering  
That the immedicable mound's beyond  
Our questioning, beyond our pity even.  
But when nine days had gone I stood again  
Before his chair and bending down my head  
Told him, that when Orion rose, and all  
The women of his household were asleep,  
To go—for hope would give his limbs the  
power—  
To an old empty woodman's house that's  
hidden  
Close to a clump of beech trees in the wood  
Westward of Tara, there to await a friend  
That could, as he had told her, work his  
cure  
And would be no harsh friend.  
When night had deepened,

I groped my way through boughs, and over  
roots,

Till oak and hazel ceased and beech began,  
And found the house, a sputtering torch  
within,

And stretched out sleeping on a pile of skins  
Ardan, and though I called to him and tried  
To shake him out of sleep, I could not rouse  
him.

I waited till the night was on the turn,  
Then fearing that some labourer, on his way  
To plough or pasture-land, might see me  
there,

Went out.

Among the ivy-covered rocks,  
As on the blue light of a sword, a man  
Who had unnatural majesty, and eyes  
Like the eyes of some great kite scouring  
the woods,

Stood on my path. Trembling from head  
to foot

I gazed at him like grouse upon a kite ;  
But with a voice that had unnatural music,  
' A weary wooing and a long,' he said,  
' Speaking of love through other lips and  
looking

Under the eyelids of another, for it was my  
craft

That put a passion in the sleeper there,  
And when I had got my will and drawn you  
here,

Where I may speak to you alone, my craft  
Sucked up the passion out of him again  
And left mere sleep. He'll wake when the  
sun wakes,

Push out his vigorous limbs and rub his  
eyes,  
And wonder what has ailed him these twelve  
months.'

I cowered back upon the wall in terror,  
But that sweet-sounding voice ran on :  
' Woman,

I was your husband when you rode the air,  
Danced in the whirling foam and in the dust,  
In days you have not kept in memory,  
Being betrayed into a cradle, and I come  
That I may claim you as my wife again.'

I was no longer terrified, his voice  
Had half awakened some old memory,  
Yet answered him : ' I am King Eochaid's  
wife

And with him have found every happiness  
Women can find.' With a most masterful  
voice,

That made the body seem as it were a  
string

Under a bow, he cried : ' What happiness  
Can lovers have that know their happiness  
Must end at the dumb stone ? But where  
we build

Our sudden palaces in the still air  
Pleasure itself can bring no weariness,

Nor can time waste the cheek, nor is there  
foot

That has grown weary of the whirling dance,  
Nor an unlaughing mouth, but mine that  
mourns,

Among those mouths that sing their sweet-  
hearts' praise,

Your empty bed.' 'How should I love,'  
I answered,

'Were it not that when the dawn has lit  
my bed

And shown my husband sleeping there, I  
have sighed,

"Your strength and nobleness will pass  
away."

Or how should love be worth its pains were  
it not

That when he has fallen asleep within my  
arms,

Being wearied out, I love in man the child?

What can they know of love that do not  
know

She builds her nest upon a narrow ledge

Above a windy precipice?' Then he:

'Seeing that when you come to the death-  
bed

You must return, whether you would or no,

This human life blotted from memory,

Why must I live some thirty, forty years,

Alone with all this useless happiness?'

Thereon he seized me in his arms, but I



Thrust him away with both my hands and  
cried,

‘ Never will I believe there is any change  
Can blot out of my memory this life  
Sweetened by death, but if I could believe  
That were a double hunger in my lips  
For what is doubly brief.’

And now the shape,  
My hands were pressed to, vanished suddenly.

I staggered, but a beech tree stayed my fall,  
And clinging to it I could hear the cocks  
Crow upon Tara.”

King Eochaid bowed his head  
And thanked her for her kindness to his  
brother,  
For that she promised, and for that refused.

Thereon the bellowing of the empounded  
herds

Rose round the walls, and through the  
bronze-ringed door

Jostled and shouted those war-wasted men,  
And in the midst King Eochaid’s brother  
stood,

And bade all welcome, being ignorant.

TO A WEALTHY MAN WHO PROMISED  
A SECOND SUBSCRIPTION TO THE  
DUBLIN MUNICIPAL GALLERY IF  
IT WERE PROVED THE PEOPLE  
WANTED PICTURES

You gave but will not give again  
Until enough of Paudeen's pence  
By Biddy's halfpennies have lain  
To be "some sort of evidence,"  
Before you'll put your guineas down,  
That things it were a pride to give  
Are what the blind and ignorant town  
Imagines best to make it thrive.  
What cared Duke Ercole, that bid  
His mummers to the market place,  
What th' onion-sellers thought or did  
So that his Plautus set the pace  
For the Italian comedies?  
And Guidobaldo, when he made  
That grammar school of courtesies  
Where wit and beauty learned their trade  
Upon Urbino's windy hill,  
Had sent no runners to and fro  
That he might learn the shepherds' will.

And when they drove out Cosimo,  
Indifferent how the rancour ran,  
He gave the hours they had set free  
To Michelozzo's latest plan  
For the San Marco Library,  
Whence turbulent Italy should draw  
Delight in Art whose end is peace,  
In logic and in natural law  
By sucking at the dugs of Greece.

Your open hand but shows our loss,  
For he knew better how to live.  
Let Paudeens play at pitch and toss,  
Look up in the sun's eye and give  
What the exultant heart calls good  
That some new day may breed the best  
Because you gave, not what they would  
But the right twigs for an eagle's nest!

*December 1912.*

## SEPTEMBER 1913

WHAT need you, being come to sense,  
But fumble in a greasy till  
And add the halfpence to the pence  
And prayer to shivering prayer, until  
You have dried the marrow from the bone ;  
For men were born to pray and save :  
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,  
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Yet they were of a different kind  
The names that stilled your childish play,  
They have gone about the world like wind,  
But little time had they to pray  
For whom the hangman's rope was spun,  
And what, God help us, could they save :  
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,  
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Was it for this the wild geese spread  
The grey wing upon every tide ;  
For this that all that blood was shed,  
For this Edward Fitzgerald died,  
And Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone,  
All that delirium of the brave ;

Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,  
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Yet could we turn the years again,  
And call those exiles as they were  
In all their loneliness and pain,  
You'd cry "Some woman's yellow hair  
Has maddened every mother's son":  
They weighed so lightly what they gave,  
But let them be, they're dead and gone,  
They're with O'Leary in the grave.

TO A FRIEND WHOSE WORK  
HAS COME TO NOTHING

Now all the truth is out,  
Be secret and take defeat  
From any brazen throat,  
For how can you compete,  
Being honour bred, with one  
Who, were it proved he lies,  
Were neither shamed in his own  
Nor in his neighbours' eyes ?  
Bred to a harder thing  
Than Triumph, turn away  
And like a laughing string  
Whereon mad fingers play  
Amid a place of stone,  
Be secret and exult,  
Because of all things known  
That is most difficult.

## PAUDEEN

INDIGNANT at the fumbling wits, the obscure  
spite  
Of our old Paudeen in his shop, I stumbled  
blind  
Among the stones and thorn trees, under  
morning light ;  
Until a curlew cried and in the luminous  
wind  
A curlew answered ; and suddenly there-  
upon I thought  
That on the lonely height where all are in  
God's eye,  
There cannot be, confusion of our sound  
forgot,  
A single soul that lacks a sweet crystalline  
cry.

## TO A SHADE

IF you have revisited the town, thin Shade,  
Whether to look upon your monument  
(I wonder if the builder has been paid)  
Or happier thoughted when the day is spent  
To drink of that salt breath out of the sea  
When grey gulls flit about instead of men,  
And the gaunt houses put on majesty :  
Let these content you and be gone again ;  
For they are at their old tricks yet.

A man  
Of your own passionate serving kind who  
    had brought  
In his full hands what, had they only known,  
Had given their children's children loftier  
    thought,  
Sweeter emotion, working in their veins  
Like gentle blood, has been driven from the  
    place,  
And insult heaped upon him for his pains  
And for his open-handedness, disgrace ;  
Your enemy, an old foul mouth, had set  
The pack upon him.

Go, unquiet wanderer,  
And gather the Glasnevin coverlet



About your head till the dust stops your ear,  
The time for you to taste of that salt breath  
And listen at the corners has not come ;  
You had enough of sorrow before death—  
Away, away ! You are safer in the tomb.

*September 29, 1913.*

## WHEN HELEN LIVED

WE have cried in our despair  
That men desert,  
For some trivial affair  
Or noisy, insolent, sport,  
Beauty that we have won  
From bitterest hours ;  
Yet we, had we walked within  
Those topless towers  
Where Helen walked with her boy,  
Had given but as the rest  
Of the men and women of Troy,  
A word and a jest.

ON THOSE THAT HATED "THE PLAY-  
BOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD," 1907

ONCE, when midnight smote the air,  
Eunuchs ran through Hell and met  
On every crowded street to stare  
Upon great Juan riding by :  
Even like these to rail and sweat  
Staring upon his sinewy thigh.

## THE THREE BEGGARS

*" THOUGH to my feathers in the wet,  
I have stood here from break of day,  
I have not found a thing to eat  
For only rubbish comes my way.  
Am I to live on lebeen-lone ? "*  
*Muttered the old crane of Gort.*  
*" For all my pains on lebeen-lone."*

King Guari walked amid his court  
The palace-yard and river-side  
And there to three old beggars said :  
" You that have wandered far and wide  
Can ravel out what's in my head.  
Do men who least desire get most,  
Or get the most who most desire ? "  
A beggar said : " They get the most  
Whom man or devil cannot tire,  
And what could make their muscles taut  
Unless desire had made them so."  
But Guari laughed with secret thought,  
" If that be true as it seems true,  
One of you three is a rich man,  
For he shall have a thousand pounds  
Who is first asleep, if but he can

Sleep before the third noon sounds."  
 And thereon merry as a bird,  
 With his old thoughts King Guari went  
 From river-side and palace-yard  
 And left them to their argument.  
 "And if I win," one beggar said,  
 "Though I am old I shall persuade  
 A pretty girl to share my bed";  
 The second: "I shall learn a trade";  
 The third: "I'll hurry to the course  
 Among the other gentlemen,  
 And lay it all upon a horse";  
 The second: "I have thought again:  
 A farmer has more dignity."  
 One to another sighed and cried:  
 The exorbitant dreams of beggary,  
 That idleness had borne to pride,  
 Sang through their teeth from noon to noon;  
 And when the second twilight brought  
 The frenzy of the beggars' moon  
 None closed his blood-shot eyes but sought  
 To keep his fellows from their sleep;  
 All shouted till their anger grew  
 And they were whirling in a heap.

They mauled and bit the whole night  
 through;  
 They mauled and bit till the day shone;  
 They mauled and bit through all that day  
 And till another night had gone,  
 Or if they made a moment's stay

They sat upon their heels to rail,  
And when old Guari came and stood  
Before the three to end this tale,  
They were commingling lice and blood.  
“Time’s up,” he cried, and all the three  
With blood-shot eyes upon him stared.  
“Time’s up,” he cried, and all the three  
Fell down upon the dust and snored.

*“Maybe I shall be lucky yet,  
Now they are silent,” said the crane.  
“Though to my feathers in the wet  
I’ve stood as I were made of stone  
And seen the rubbish run about,  
It’s certain there are trout somewhere  
And maybe I shall take a trout  
If but I do not seem to care.”*

## THE THREE HERMITS

THREE old hermits took the air  
By a cold and desolate sea,  
First was muttering a prayer,  
Second rummaged for a flea ;  
On a windy stone, the third,  
Giddy with his hundredth year,  
Sang unnoticed like a bird.  
“ Though the Door of Death is near  
And what waits behind the door,  
Three times in a single day  
I, though upright on the shore,  
Fall asleep when I should pray.”  
So the first but now the second,  
“ We’re but given what we have earned  
When all thoughts and deeds are reckoned,  
So it’s plain to be discerned  
That the shades of holy men,  
Who have failed being weak of will,  
Pass the Door of Birth again,  
And are plagued by crowds, until  
They’ve the passion to escape.”  
Moaned the other, “ They are thrown  
Into some most fearful shape.”  
But the second mocked his moan :

“ They are not changed to anything,  
Having loved God once, but maybe,  
To a poet or a king  
Or a witty lovely lady.”  
While he'd rummaged rags and hair,  
Caught and cracked his flea, the third,  
Giddy with his hundredth year  
Sang unnoticed like a bird.



## BEGGAR TO BEGGAR CRIED

“ TIME to put off the world and go some-  
where

And find my health again in the sea air,”

Beggar to beggar cried, being frenzy-struck,

“ And make my soul before my pate is bare.”

“ And get a comfortable wife and house

To rid me of the devil in my shoes,”

Beggar to beggar cried, being frenzy-struck,

“ And the worse devil that is between my  
thighs.”

“ And though I'd marry with a comely lass,

She need not be too comely—let it pass,”

Beggar to beggar cried, being frenzy-struck,

“ But there's a devil in a looking-glass.”

“ Nor should she be too rich, because the  
rich

Are driven by wealth as beggars by the  
itch,”

Beggar to beggar cried, being frenzy-struck,

“ And cannot have a humorous happy  
speech.”

“ And there I’ll grow respected at my ease,  
And hear amid the garden’s nightly peace,”  
Beggar to beggar cried, being frenzy-struck,  
“ The wind-blown clamour of the barnacle-  
geese.”

## RUNNING TO PARADISE

As I came over Windy Gap  
They threw a halfpenny into my cap,  
For I am running to Paradise ;  
And all that I need do is to wish  
And somebody puts his hand in the dish  
To throw me a bit of salted fish :  
And there the king *is* but as the beggar.

My brother Mourteen is worn out  
With skelping his big brawling lout,  
And I am running to Paradise ;  
A poor life do what he can,  
And though he keep a dog and a gun,  
A serving maid and a serving man :  
And there the king *is* but as the beggar.

Poor men have grown to be rich men,  
And rich men grown to be poor again,  
And I am running to Paradise ;  
And many a darling wit's grown dull  
That tossed a bare heel when at school,  
Now it has filled an old sock full :  
And there the king *is* but as the beggar.

RUNNING TO PARADISE 211

The wind is old and still at play  
While I must hurry upon my way,  
For I am running to Paradise ;  
Yet never have I lit on a friend  
To take my fancy like the wind  
That nobody can buy or bind :  
And there the king *is* but as the beggar.

## THE HOUR BEFORE DAWN

A CURSING rogue with a merry face,  
A bundle of rags upon a crutch,  
Stumbled upon that windy place  
Called Croghan, and it was as much  
As the one sturdy leg could do  
To keep him upright while he cursed.  
He had counted, where long years ago  
Queen Maeve's nine Maines had been  
nursed,

A pair of lapwings, one old sheep  
And not a house to the plain's edge,  
When close to his right hand a heap  
Of grey stones and a rocky ledge  
Reminded him that he could make,  
If he but shifted a few stones,  
A shelter till the daylight broke.

But while he fumbled with the stones  
They toppled over ; " Were it not  
I have a lucky wooden shin  
I had been hurt " ; and toppling brought  
Before his eyes, where stones had been,  
A dark deep hollow in the rock.  
He gave a gasp and thought to have fled,

## THE HOUR BEFORE DAWN 213

Being certain it was no right rock  
Because an ancient history said  
Hell Mouth lay open near that place,  
And yet stood still, because inside  
A great lad with a beery face  
Had tucked himself away beside  
A ladle and a tub of beer,  
And snored, no phantom by his look.  
So with a laugh at his own fear  
He crawled into that pleasant nook.

“ Night grows uneasy near the dawn  
Till even I sleep light ; but who  
Has tired of his own company ?  
What one of Maeve’s nine brawling sons  
Sick of his grave has wakened me ?  
But let him keep his grave for once  
That I may find the sleep I have lost.”

“ What care I if you sleep or wake  
But I’ll have no man call me ghost.”

“ Say what you please, but from daybreak  
I’ll sleep another century.”

“ And I will talk before I sleep  
And drink before I talk.”

And he  
Had dipped the wooden ladle deep  
Into the sleeper’s tub of beer  
Had not the sleeper started up.

214 THE HOUR BEFORE DAWN

“ Before you have dipped it in the beer  
I dragged from Goban’s mountain-top  
I’ll have assurance that you are able  
To value beer ; no half-legged fool  
Shall dip his nose into my ladle  
Merely for stumbling on this hole  
In the bad hour before the dawn.”

“ Why, beer is only beer.”

“ But say  
‘ I’ll sleep until the winter’s gone,  
Or maybe to Midsummer Day,’  
And drink, and you will sleep that length.”

“ I’d like to sleep till winter’s gone  
Or till the sun is in his strength.  
This blast has chilled me to the bone.”

“ I had no better plan at first.  
I thought to wait for that or this ;  
Maybe the weather was a-cursed  
Or I had no woman there to kiss ;  
So slept for half a year or so ;  
But year by year I found that less  
Gave me such pleasure I’d forgo  
Even a half hour’s nothingness,  
And when at one year’s end I found  
I had not waked a single minute,  
I chose this burrow under ground.  
I’ll sleep away all Time within it :  
My sleep were now nine centuries

## THE HOUR BEFORE DAWN 215

But for those mornings when I find  
The lapwing at their foolish cries  
And the sheep bleating at the wind  
As when I also played the fool."

The beggar in a rage began  
Upon his hunkers in the hole,  
"It's plain that you are no right man  
To mock at everything I love  
As if it were not worth the doing.  
I'd have a merry life enough  
If a good Easter wind were blowing,  
And though the winter wind is bad  
I should not be too down in the mouth  
For anything you did or said  
If but this wind were in the south."

"You cry aloud, O would 'twere spring  
Or that the wind would shift a point,  
And do not know that you would bring,  
If time were suppler in the joint,  
Neither the spring nor the south wind  
But the hour when you shall pass away  
And leave no smoking wick behind,  
For all life longs for the Last Day  
And there's no man but cocks his ear  
To know when Michael's trumpet cries  
That flesh and bone may disappear,  
And souls as if they were but sighs,  
And there be nothing but God left;  
But I alone being blessed keep



## 216 THE HOUR BEFORE DAWN

Like some old rabbit to my cleft  
And wait Him in a drunken sleep.”  
He dipped his ladle in the tub  
And drank and yawned and stretched him  
out.

The other shouted, “ You would rob  
My life of every pleasant thought  
And every comfortable thing  
And so take that and that.” Thereon  
He gave him a great pummelling,  
But might have pummelled at a stone  
For all the sleeper knew or cared ;  
And after heaped up stone on stone,  
And then, grown weary, prayed and cursed  
And heaped upon stone on stone again,  
And prayed and cursed and cursed and fled  
From Maeve and all that juggling plain,  
Nor gave God thanks till overhead  
The clouds were brightening with the dawn.

## A SONG FROM THE PLAYER QUEEN

My mother dandled me and sang,  
“ How young it is, how young ! ”  
And made a golden cradle  
That on a willow swung.

“ He went away,” my mother sang,  
“ When I was brought to bed,”  
And all the while her needle pulled  
The gold and silver thread.

She pulled the thread and bit the thread  
And made a golden gown,  
And wept because she had dreamt that I  
Was born to wear a crown.

“ When she was got,” my mother sang,  
“ I heard a sea-mew cry,  
And saw a flake of the yellow foam  
That dropped upon my thigh.”

How therefore could she help but braid  
The gold into my hair,  
And dream that I should carry  
The golden top of care ?

## THE REALISTS

HOPE that you may understand !  
What can books of men that wive  
In a dragon-guarded land,  
Paintings of the dolphin-drawn  
Sea-nymphs in their pearly waggons  
Do, but awake a hope to live  
That had gone  
With the dragons ?

I

THE WITCH

ToIL and grow rich,  
What's that but to lie  
With a foul witch  
And after, drained dry,  
To be brought  
To the chamber where  
Lies one long sought  
With despair.

## II

### THE PEACOCK

WHAT'S riches to him  
That has made a great peacock  
With the pride of his eye ?  
The wind-beaten, stone-grey,  
And desolate Three-rock  
Would nourish his whim.  
Live he or die  
Amid wet rocks and heather,  
His ghost will be gay  
Adding feather to feather  
For the pride of his eye.

## THE MOUNTAIN TOMB

POUR wine and dance if Manhood still have  
pride,  
Bring roses if the rose be yet in bloom ;  
The cataract smokes upon the mountain  
side,  
Our Father Rosicross is in his tomb.

Pull down the blinds, bring fiddle and  
clarionet  
That there be no foot silent in the room  
Nor mouth from kissing, nor from wine  
unwet ;  
Our Father Rosicross is in his tomb.

In vain, in vain ; the cataract still cries  
The everlasting taper lights the gloom ;  
All wisdom shut into his onyx eyes  
Our Father Rosicross sleeps in his tomb.

I

TO A CHILD DANCING IN  
THE WIND

DANCE there upon the shore ;  
What need have you to care  
For wind or water's roar ?  
And tumble out your hair  
That the salt drops have wet ;  
Being young you have not known  
The fool's triumph, nor yet  
Love lost as soon as won,  
Nor the best labourer dead  
And all the sheaves to bind.  
What need have you to dread  
The monstrous crying of wind ?

## II

### TWO YEARS LATER

HAS no one said those daring  
Kind eyes should be more learn'd ?  
Or warned you how despairing  
The moths are when they are burned,  
I could have warned you, but you are young,  
So we speak a different tongue.

O you will take whatever's offered  
And dream that all the world's a friend,  
Suffer as your mother suffered,  
Be as broken in the end.  
But I am old and you are young,  
And I speak a barbarous tongue.



## A MEMORY OF YOUTH

THE moments passed as at a play,  
I had the wisdom love brings forth ;  
I had my share of mother wit  
And yet for all that I could say,  
And though I had her praise for it,  
A cloud blown from the cut-throat north  
Suddenly hid love's moon away.

Believing every word I said  
I praised her body and her mind  
Till pride had made her eyes grow bright,  
And pleasure made her cheeks grow red,  
And vanity her footfall light,  
Yet we, for all that praise, could find  
Nothing but darkness overhead.

We sat as silent as a stone,  
We knew, though she'd not said a word,  
That even the best of love must die,  
And had been savagely undone  
Were it not that love upon the cry  
Of a most ridiculous little bird  
Tore from the clouds his marvellous moon.

## FALLEN MAJESTY

ALTHOUGH crowds gathered once if she but  
showed her face,  
And even old men's eyes grew dim, this  
hand alone,  
Like some last courtier at a gypsy camping  
place  
Babbling of fallen majesty, records what's  
gone.

The lineaments, a heart that laughter has  
made sweet,  
These, these remain, but I record what's  
gone. A crowd  
Will gather, and not know it walks the very  
street  
Whereon a thing once walked that seemed a  
burning cloud.

## FRIENDS

Now must I these three praise—  
Three women that have wrought  
What joy is in my days ;  
One that no passing thought,  
Nor those unpassing cares,  
No, not in these fifteen  
Many times troubled years,  
Could ever come between  
Heart and delighted heart ;  
And one because her hand  
Had strength that could unbind  
What none can understand,  
What none can have and thrive,  
Youth's dreamy load, till she  
So changed me that I live  
Labouring in ecstasy.  
And what of her that took  
All till my youth was gone  
With scarce a pitying look ?  
How should I praise that one ?  
When day begins to break  
I count my good and bad,  
Being wakeful for her sake,

Remembering what she had,  
What eagle look still shows,  
While up from my heart's root  
So great a sweetness flows  
I shake from head to foot.

## THE COLD HEAVEN

SUDDENLY I saw the cold and rook-delighting  
Heaven  
That seemed as though ice burned and was  
but the more ice,  
And thereupon imagination and heart were  
driven  
So wild that every casual thought of that  
and this  
Vanished, and left but memories, that should  
be out of season  
With the hot blood of youth, of love crossed  
long ago ;  
And I took all the blame out of all sense and  
reason,  
Until I cried and trembled and rocked to  
and fro,  
Riddled with light. Ah ! when the ghost  
begins to quicken,  
Confusion of the death-bed over, is it sent  
Out naked on the roads, as the books say,  
and stricken  
By the injustice of the skies for punishment ?

## THAT THE NIGHT COME

SHE lived in storm and strife,  
Her soul had such desire  
For what proud death may bring  
That it could not endure  
The common good of life,  
But lived as 'twere a king  
That packed his marriage day  
With banneret and pennon,  
Trumpet and kettledrum,  
And the outrageous cannon,  
To bundle time away  
That the night come.

## AN APPOINTMENT

BEING out of heart with government  
I took a broken root to fling  
Where the proud, wayward squirrel went,  
Taking delight that he could spring;  
And he, with that low whinnying sound  
That is like laughter, sprang again  
And so to the other tree at a bound.  
Nor the tame will, nor timid brain,  
Nor heavy knitting of the brow  
Bred that fierce tooth and cleanly limb  
And threw him up to laugh on the bough;  
No government appointed him.

# I

## THE MAGI

Now as at all times I can see in the mind's  
eye,  
In their stiff, painted clothes, the pale un-  
satisfied ones  
Appear and disappear in the blue depth of  
the sky  
With all their ancient faces like rain-beaten  
stones,  
And all their helms of silver hovering side  
by side,  
And all their eyes still fixed, hoping to find  
once more,  
Being by Calvary's turbulence unsatisfied,  
The uncontrollable mystery on the bestial  
floor.



## II

### THE DOLLS

A DOLL in the doll-maker's house  
Looks at the cradle and bawls :  
" That is an insult to us."  
But the oldest of all the dolls  
Who had seen, being kept for show,  
Generations of his sort,  
Out-screams the whole shelf : " Although  
There's not a man can report  
Evil of this place,  
The man and the woman bring  
Hither to our disgrace,  
A noisy and filthy thing."  
Hearing him groan and stretch  
The doll-maker's wife is aware  
Her husband has heard the wretch,  
And crouched by the arm of his chair,  
She murmurs into his ear,  
Head upon shoulder leant :  
" My dear, my dear, oh dear,  
It was an accident."

## A COAT

I MADE my song a coat  
Covered with embroideries  
Out of old mythologies  
From heel to throat ;  
But the fools caught it,  
Wore it in the world's eyes  
As though they'd wrought it.  
Song, let them take it  
For there's more enterprise  
In walking naked.

*WHILE I, from that reed-throated whisperer  
Who comes at need, although not now as once  
A clear articulation in the air  
But inwardly, surmise companions  
Beyond the fling of the dull ass's hoof,  
—Ben Jonson's phrase—and find when June  
is come  
At Kyle-na-no under that ancient roof  
A sterner conscience and a friendlier home,  
I can forgive even that wrong of wrongs,  
Those undreamt accidents that have made me  
—Seeing that Fame has perished this long  
while  
Being but a part of ancient ceremony—  
Notorious, till all my priceless things  
Are but a post the passing dogs defile.*

THE WILD SWANS AT COOLE  
(1919)



## THE WILD SWANS AT COOLE

THE trees are in their autumn beauty,  
The woodland paths are dry,  
Under the October twilight the water  
Mirrors a still sky ;  
Upon the brimming water among the stones  
Are nine and fifty swans.

The nineteenth Autumn has come upon me  
Since I first made my count ;  
I saw, before I had well finished,  
All suddenly mount  
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings  
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,  
And now my heart is sore.  
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,  
The first time on this shore,  
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,  
Trod with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,  
They paddle in the cold,  
Companionable streams or climb the air ;

238 THE WILD SWANS AT COOLE

Their hearts have not grown old ;  
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,  
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water  
Mysterious, beautiful ;  
Among what rushes will they build,  
By what lake's edge or pool  
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day  
To find they have flown away ?

IN MEMORY OF  
MAJOR ROBERT GREGORY

I

Now that we're almost settled in our house  
I'll name the friends that cannot sup with us  
Beside a fire of turf in th' ancient tower,  
And having talked to some late hour  
Climb up the narrow winding stair to bed :  
Discoverers of forgotten truth  
Or mere companions of my youth,  
All, all are in my thoughts to-night being  
dead.

2

Always we'd have the new friend meet the  
old  
And we are hurt if either friend seem cold,  
And there is salt to lengthen out the smart  
In the affections of our heart,  
And quarrels are blown up upon that head ;  
But not a friend that I would bring  
This night can set us quarrelling,  
For all that come into my mind are dead.



## 3

Lionel Johnson comes the first to mind,  
 That loved his learning better than mankind,  
 Though courteous to the worst; much  
     falling he  
 Brooded upon sanctity  
 Till all his Greek and Latin learning seemed  
 A long blast upon the horn that brought  
 A little nearer to his thought  
 A measureless consummation that he  
     dreamed.

## 4

And that enquiring man John Synge comes  
     next  
 That dying chose the living world for text  
 And never could have rested in the tomb  
 But that, long travelling, he had come  
 Towards nightfall upon certain set apart  
 In a most desolate stony place,  
 Towards nightfall upon a race  
 Passionate and simple like his heart.

## 5

And then I think of old George Pollexfen,  
 In muscular youth well known to Mayo  
     men

MAJOR ROBERT GREGORY 241

For horsemanship at meets or at race-  
courses,  
That could have shown how purebred horses  
And solid men, for all their passion, live  
But as the outrageous stars incline  
By opposition, square and trine ;  
Having grown sluggish and contemplative.

6

They were my close companions many a  
year,  
A portion of my mind and life, as it were,  
And now their breathless faces seem to look  
Out of some old picture-book ;  
I am accustomed to their lack of breath,  
But not that my dear friend's dear son,  
Our Sidney and our perfect man,  
Could share in that discourtesy of death.

7

For all things the delighted eye now sees  
Were loved by him ; the old storm-broken  
trees  
That cast their shadows upon road and  
bridge ;  
The tower set on the stream's edge ;  
The ford where drinking cattle make a stir  
Nightly, and startled by that sound

242 MAJOR ROBERT GREGORY

The water-hen must change her ground ;  
He might have been your heartiest welcomer.

8

When with the Galway foxhounds he would  
ride  
From Castle Taylor to the Roxborough side  
Or Esserkelly plain, few kept his pace ;  
At Mooneen he had leaped a place  
So perilous that half the astonished meet  
Had shut their eyes, and where was it  
He rode a race without a bit ?  
And yet his mind outran the horses' feet.

9

We dreamed that a great painter had been  
born  
To cold Clare rock and Galway rock and  
thorn,  
To that stern colour and that delicate line  
That are our secret discipline  
Wherein the gazing heart doubles her might.  
Soldier, scholar, horseman, he,  
And yet he had the intensity  
To have published all to be a world's  
delight.

IO

What other could so well have counselled us  
 In all lovely intricacies of a house  
 As he that practised or that understood  
 All work in metal or in wood,  
 In moulded plaster or in carven stone ?  
 Soldier, scholar, horseman, he,  
 And all he did done perfectly  
 As though he had but that one trade alone.

II

Some burn damp fagots, others may consume  
 The entire combustible world in one small  
     room  
 As though dried straw, and if we turn  
     about  
 The bare chimney is gone black out  
 Because the work had finished in that flare.  
 Soldier, scholar, horseman, he,  
 As 'twere all life's epitome.  
 What made us dream that he could comb  
     grey hair ?

12

I had thought, seeing how bitter is that  
     wind  
 That shakes the shutter, to have brought to  
     mind

244 MAJOR ROBERT GREGORY

All those that manhood tried, or childhood  
    loved  
Or boyish intellect approved,  
With some appropriate commentary on  
    each ;  
Until imagination brought  
A fitter welcome ; but a thought  
Of that late death took all my heart for  
    speech.

## AN IRISH AIRMAN FORESEES HIS DEATH

I KNOW that I shall meet my fate  
Somewhere among the clouds above ;  
Those that I fight I do not hate,  
Those that I guard I do not love ;  
My country is Kiltartan Cross,  
My countrymen Kiltartan's poor, ·  
No likely end could bring them loss  
Or leave them happier than before.  
Nor law, nor duty bade me fight,  
Nor public men, nor cheering crowds,  
A lonely impulse of delight  
Drove to this tumult in the clouds ;  
I balanced all, brought all to mind,  
The years to come seemed waste of breath,  
A waste of breath the years behind  
In balance with this life, this death.

## MEN IMPROVE WITH THE YEARS

I AM worn out with dreams ;  
A weather-worn, marble triton  
Among the streams ;  
And all day long I look  
Upon this lady's beauty  
As though I had found in book  
A pictured beauty,  
Pleased to have filled the eyes  
Or the discerning ears,  
Delighted to be but wise,  
For men improve with the years ;  
And yet and yet  
Is this my dream, or the truth ?  
O would that we had met  
When I had my burning youth ;  
But I grow old among dreams,  
A weather-worn, marble triton  
Among the streams.

## THE COLLAR-BONE OF A HARE

Would I could cast a sail on the water  
Where many a king has gone  
And many a king's daughter,  
And alight at the comely trees and the lawn,  
The playing upon pipes and the dancing,  
And learn that the best thing is  
To change my loves while dancing  
And pay but a kiss for a kiss.

I would find by the edge of that water  
The collar-bone of a hare  
Worn thin by the lapping of water,  
And pierce it through with a gimlet and  
stare  
At the old bitter world where they marry in  
churches,  
And laugh over the untroubled water  
At all who marry in churches,  
Through the white thin bone of a hare.



## UNDER THE ROUND TOWER

“ ALTHOUGH I’d lie lapped up in linen  
A deal I’d sweat and little earn  
If I should live as live the neighbours,”  
Cried the beggar, Billy Byrne ;  
“ Stretch bones till the daylight come  
On great-grandfather’s battered tomb.”

Upon a grey old battered tombstone  
In Glendalough beside the stream,  
Where the O’Byrnes and Byrnes are buried,  
He stretched his bones and fell in a dream  
Of sun and moon that a good hour  
Bellowed and pranced in the round tower ;

Of golden king and silver lady,  
Bellowing up and bellowing round,  
Till toes mastered a sweet measure,  
Mouth mastered a sweet sound,  
Prancing round and prancing up  
Until they pranced upon the top.

That golden king and that wild lady  
Sang till stars began to fade,  
Hands gripped in hands, toes close together,

Hair spread on the wind they made ;  
That lady and that golden king  
Could like a brace of blackbirds sing.

“ It’s certain that my luck is broken,”  
That rambling jailbird Billy said ;  
“ Before nightfall I’ll pick a pocket  
And snug it in a feather-bed,  
I cannot find the peace of home  
On great-grandfather’s battered tomb.”

## SOLOMON TO SHEBA

SANG Solomon to Sheba,  
And kissed her dusky face,  
"All day long from mid-day  
We have talked in the one place,  
All day long from shadowless noon  
We have gone round and round  
In the narrow theme of love  
Like an old horse in a pound."

To Solomon sang Sheba,  
Planted on his knees,  
"If you had broached a matter  
That might the learned please,  
You had before the sun had thrown  
Our shadows on the ground  
Discovered that my thoughts, not it,  
Are but a narrow pound."

Sang Solomon to Sheba,  
And kissed her Arab eyes,  
"There's not a man or woman  
Born under the skies  
Dare match in learning with us two,  
And all day long we have found  
There's not a thing but love can make  
The world a narrow pound."

## THE LIVING BEAUTY

I'LL say and maybe dream I have drawn  
content—

Seeing that time has frozen up the blood,  
The wick of youth being burned and the oil  
spent—

From beauty that is cast out of a mould  
In bronze, or that in dazzling marble  
appears,

Appears, and when we have gone is gone  
again,

Being more indifferent to our solitude  
Than 'twere an apparition. O heart, we  
are old,

The living beauty is for younger men,  
We cannot pay its tribute of wild tears.

## A SONG

I THOUGHT no more was needed  
Youth to prolong  
Than dumb-bell and foil  
To keep the body young.  
Oh, who could have foretold  
That the heart grows old ?

Though I have many words,  
What woman's satisfied,  
I am no longer faint  
Because at her side ?  
Oh, who could have foretold  
That the heart grows old ?

I have not lost desire  
But the heart that I had ;  
I thought 'twould burn my body  
Laid on the death-bed,  
For who could have foretold  
That the heart grows old ?

## TO A YOUNG BEAUTY

DEAR fellow-artist, why so free  
With every sort of company,  
With every Jack and Jill ?  
Choose your companions from the best ;  
Who draws a bucket with the rest  
Soon topples down the hill.

You may, that mirror for a school,  
Be passionate, not bountiful  
As common beauties may,  
Who were not born to keep in trim  
With old Ezekiel's cherubim  
But those of Beaujolet.

I know what wages beauty gives,  
How hard a life her servant lives,  
Yet praise the winters gone :  
There is not a fool can call me friend,  
And I may dine at journey's end  
With Landor and with Donne.

## TO A YOUNG GIRL

My dear, my dear, I know  
More than another  
What makes your heart beat so ;  
Not even your own mother  
Can know it as I know,  
Who broke my heart for her  
When the wild thought,  
That she denies  
And has forgot,  
Set all her blood astir  
And glittered in her eyes.

## THE SCHOLARS

BALD heads forgetful of their sins,  
Old, learned, respectable bald heads  
Edit and annotate the lines  
That young men, tossing on their beds,  
Rhymed out in love's despair  
To flatter beauty's ignorant ear.

They'll cough in the ink to the world's end;  
Wear out the carpet with their shoes  
Earning respect; have no strange friend;  
If they have sinned nobody knows.  
Lord, what would they say  
Should their Catullus walk that way?



## TOM O'ROUGHLEY

“ THOUGH logic choppers rule the town,  
And every man and maid and boy  
Has marked a distant object down,  
An aimless joy is a pure joy,”  
Or so did Tom O'Roughley say  
That saw the surges running by,  
“ And wisdom is a butterfly  
And not a gloomy bird of prey.

“ If little planned is little sinned  
But little need the grave distress.  
What's dying but a second wind ?  
How but in zig-zag wantonness  
Could trumpeter Michael be so brave ? ”  
Or something of that sort he said,  
“ And if my dearest friend were dead  
I'd dance a measure on his grave.”

## THE SAD SHEPHERD

SHEPHERD

THAT cry's from the first cuckoo of the year.  
I wished before it ceased.

GOATHERD

Nor bird nor beast  
Could make me wish for anything this day,  
Being old, but that the old alone might die,  
And that would be against God's Providence.  
Let the young wish. But what has brought  
you here?  
Never until this moment have we met  
Where my goats browse on the scarce grass  
or leap  
From stone to stone.

SHEPHERD.

I am looking for strayed sheep ;  
Something has troubled me and in my  
trouble  
I let them stray. I thought of rhyme  
alone,

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For rhyme can beat a measure out of  
trouble  
And make the daylight sweet once more;  
but when  
I had driven every rhyme into its place  
The sheep had gone from theirs.

GOATHERD

I know right well  
What turned so good a shepherd from his  
charge.

SHEPHERD

He that was best in every country sport  
And every country craft, and of us all  
Most courteous to slow age and hasty  
youth,  
Is dead.

GOATHERD

The boy that brings my griddle cake  
Brought the bare news.

SHEPHERD

He had thrown the crook away  
And died in the great war beyond the sea.

GOATHERD

He had often played his pipes among my  
hills,  
And when he played it was their loneliness,  
The exultation of their stone, that cried  
Under his fingers.

SHEPHERD

I had it from his mother,  
And his own flock was browsing at the door.

GOATHERD

How does she bear her grief? There is  
not a shepherd  
But grows more gentle when he speaks her  
name,  
Remembering kindness done, and how can I,  
That found when I had neither goat nor  
grazing  
New welcome and old wisdom at her fire  
Till winter blasts were gone, but speak of  
her  
Even before his children and his wife.

SHEPHERD

She goes about her house erect and calm  
Between the pantry and the linen chest,

Or else at meadow or at grazing overlooks  
Her labouring men, as though her darling  
    lived,  
But for her grandson now ; there is no  
    change  
But such as I have seen upon her face  
Watching our shepherd sports at harvest-  
    time  
When her son's turn was over.

## GOATHERD

                                    Sing your song,  
I too have rhymed my reveries, but youth  
Is hot to show whatever it has found,  
And till that's done can neither work nor  
    wait.  
Old goatherds and old goats, if in all else  
Youth can excel them in accomplishment,  
Are learned in waiting.

## SHEPHERD

                            You cannot but have seen  
That he alone had gathered up no gear,  
Set carpenters to work on no wide table,  
On no long bench nor lofty milking shed  
As others will, when first they take possession,  
But left the house as in his father's time  
As though he knew himself, as it were, a  
    cuckoo,

No settled man. And now that he is gone  
 There's nothing of him left but half a score  
 Of sorrowful, austere, sweet, lofty pipe  
 tunes.

## GOATHERD

You have put the thought in rhyme.

## SHEPHERD

I worked all day,  
 And when 'twas done so little had I done  
 That maybe "I am sorry" in plain prose  
 Had sounded better to your mountain fancy.  
*[He sings.]*

"Like the speckled bird that steers  
 Thousands of leagues oversea,  
 And runs for a while or a while half-flies  
 Upon his yellow legs through our meadows,  
 He stayed for a while; and we  
 Had scarcely accustomed our ears  
 To his speech at the break of day,  
 Had scarcely accustomed our eyes  
 To his shape at the rinsing pool  
 Among the evening shadows,  
 When he vanished from ears and eyes.  
 I had wished a dear thing on that day  
 I heard him first, but man is a fool."

## GOATHERD

You sing as always of the natural life,  
And I that made like music in my youth  
Hearing it now have sighed for that young  
man  
And certain lost companions of my own.

## SHEPHERD

They say that on your barren mountain  
ridge  
You have measured out the road that the  
soul treads  
When it has vanished from our natural  
eyes ;  
That you have talked with apparitions.

## GOATHERD

Indeed  
My daily thoughts since the first stupor of  
youth  
Have found the path my goats' feet cannot  
find.

## SHEPHERD

Sing, for it may be that your thoughts have  
plucked  
Some medicable herb to make our grief  
Less bitter.

## GOATHERD

They have brought me from that ridge  
Seed pods and flowers that are not all wild  
poppy.

[*Sings.*

“ He grows younger every second  
That were all his birthdays reckoned  
Much too solemn seemed ;  
Because of what he had dreamed,  
Or the ambitions that he served,  
Much too solemn and reserved.  
Jaunting, journeying  
To his own dayspring,  
He unpacks the loaded pern  
Of all 'twas pain or joy to learn,  
Of all that he had made.  
The outrageous war shall fade ;  
At some old winding whitethorn root  
He'll practise on the shepherd's flute,  
Or on the close-cropped grass  
Court his shepherd lass,  
Or run where lads reform our daytime  
Till that is their long shouting playtime ;  
Knowledge he shall unwind  
Through victories of the mind,  
Till, clambering at the cradle side,  
He dreams himself his mother's pride,  
All knowledge lost in trance  
Of sweeter ignorance.”



## SHEPHERD

When I have shut these ewes and this old  
ram

Into the fold, we'll to the woods and there  
Cut out our rhymes on strips of new-torn  
bark

But put no name and leave them at her door.  
To know the mountain and the valley have  
grieved

May be a quiet thought to wife and mother,  
And children when they spring up shoulder  
high.

## LINES WRITTEN IN DEJECTION

WHEN have I last looked on  
The round green eyes and the long wavering  
bodies  
Of the dark leopards of the moon ?  
All the wild witches those most noble ladies,  
For all their broom-sticks and their tears,  
Their angry tears, are gone.  
The holy centaurs of the hills are vanished ;  
I have nothing but the embittered sun ;  
Banished heroic mother moon and vanished,  
And now that I have come to fifty years  
I must endure the timid sun.

## THE DAWN

I would be ignorant as the dawn  
That has looked down  
On that old queen measuring a town  
With the pin of a brooch,  
Or on the withered men that saw  
From their pedantic Babylon  
The careless planets in their courses,  
The stars fade out where the moon comes,  
And took their tablets and did sums ;  
I would be ignorant as the dawn  
That merely stood, rocking the glittering  
coach  
Above the cloudy shoulders of the horses ;  
I would be—for no knowledge is worth a  
straw—  
Ignorant and wanton as the dawn.

## ON WOMAN

MAY God be praised for woman  
That gives up all her mind,  
A man may find in no man  
A friendship of her kind  
That covers all he has brought  
As with her flesh and bone,  
Nor quarrels with a thought  
Because it is not her own.

Though pedantry denies  
It's plain the Bible means  
That Solomon grew wise  
While talking with his queens  
Yet never could, although  
They say he counted grass,  
Count all the praises due  
When Sheba was his lass,  
When she the iron wrought, or  
When from the smithy fire  
It shuddered in the water :  
Harshness of their desire  
That made them stretch and yawn,  
Pleasure that comes with sleep,  
Shudder that made them one.

What else He give or keep  
God grant me—no not here,  
For I am not so bold  
To hope a thing so dear  
Now I am growing old,  
But when if the tale's true  
The Pestle of the moon  
That pounds up all anew  
Brings me to birth again—  
To find what once I had  
And know what once I have known,  
Until I am driven mad,  
Sleep driven from my bed,  
By tenderness and care,  
Pity, an aching head,  
Gnashing of teeth, despair ;  
And all because of some one  
Perverse creature of chance,  
And live like Solomon  
That Sheba led a dance.

## THE FISHERMAN

ALTHOUGH I can see him still  
The freckled man who goes  
To a grey place on a hill  
In grey Connemara clothes  
At dawn to cast his flies,  
It's long since I began  
To call up to the eyes  
This wise and simple man.  
All day I'd looked in the face  
What I had hoped 'twould be  
To write for my own race  
And the reality ;  
The living men that I hate,  
The dead man that I loved,  
The craven man in his seat,  
The insolent unreprieved  
And no knave brought to book  
Who has won a drunken cheer,  
The witty man and his joke  
Aimed at the commonest ear,  
The clever man who cries  
The catch-cries of the clown,  
The beating down of the wise  
And great Art beaten down.

Maybe a twelvemonth since  
Suddenly I began,  
In scorn of this audience  
Imagining a man,  
And his sun-freckled face,  
And grey Connemara cloth,  
Climbing up to a place  
Where stone is dark under froth,  
And the down turn of his wrist  
When the flies drop in the stream ;  
A man who does not exist,  
A man who is but a dream ;  
And cried, " Before I am old  
I shall have written him one  
Poem maybe as cold  
And passionate as the dawn."

## THE HAWK

“ CALL down the hawk from the air ;  
Let him be hooded or caged  
Till the yellow eye has grown mild,  
For larder and spit are bare,  
The old cook enraged,  
The scullion gone wild.”

“ I will not be clapped in a hood,  
Nor a cage, nor alight upon wrist,  
Now I have learnt to be proud  
Hovering over the wood  
In the broken mist  
Or tumbling cloud.”

“ What tumbling cloud did you cleave,  
Yellow-eyed hawk of the mind,  
Last evening ? that I, who had sat  
Dumfounded before a knave,  
Should give to my friend  
A pretence of wit.”



## MEMORY

ONE had a lovely face,  
And two or three had charm,  
But charm and face were in vain  
Because the mountain grass  
Cannot but keep the form  
Where the mountain hare has lain.

## HER PRAISE

SHE is foremost of those that I would hear  
praised.

I have gone about the house, gone up and  
down

As a man does who has published a new  
book

Or a young girl dressed out in her new gown,  
And though I have turned the talk by hook  
or crook

Until her praise should be the uppermost  
theme,

A woman spoke of some new tale she had  
read,

A man confusedly in a half dream

As though some other name ran in his head.

She is foremost of those that I would hear  
praised.

I will talk no more of books or the long war  
But walk by the dry thorn until I have  
found

Some beggar sheltering from the wind, and  
there

Manage the talk until her name come round.

If there be rags enough he will know her  
name

And be well pleased remembering it, for in  
the old days,

Though she had young men's praise and  
old men's blame,

Among the poor both old and young gave  
her praise.

## THE PEOPLE

“WHAT have I earned for all that work,” I  
said,

“For all that I have done at my own charge ?  
The daily spite of this unmannerly town,  
Where who has served the most is most  
defamed,

The reputation of his lifetime lost  
Between the night and morning. I might  
have lived,

And you know well how great the longing  
has been,

Where every day my footfall should have lit  
In the green shadow of Ferrara wall ;  
Or climbed among the images of the past—  
The unperturbed and courtly images—  
Evening and morning, the steep street of  
Urbino

To where the duchess and her people talked  
The stately midnight through until they  
stood

In their great window looking at the dawn ;  
I might have had no friend that could not  
mix

Courtesy and passion into one like those

That saw the wicks grow yellow in the dawn ;  
I might have used the one substantial right  
My trade allows : chosen my company,  
And chosen what scenery had pleased me  
best."

Thereon my phoenix answered in reproof,  
" The drunkards, pilferers of public funds,  
All the dishonest crowd I had driven away,  
When my luck changed and they dared meet  
my face,  
Crawled from obscurity, and set upon me  
Those I had served and some that I had fed ;  
Yet never have I, now nor any time,  
Complained of the people."

All I could reply

Was : " You, that have not lived in thought  
but deed,  
Can have the purity of a natural force,  
But I, whose virtues are the definitions  
Of the analytic mind, can neither close  
The eye of the mind nor keep my tongue  
from speech."  
And yet, because my heart leaped at her  
words,  
I was abashed, and now they come to mind  
After nine years, I sink my head abashed.

## HIS PHOENIX

THERE is a queen in China, or maybe it's  
in Spain,  
And birthdays and holidays such praises  
can be heard  
Of her unblemished lineaments, a whiteness  
with no stain,  
That she might be that sprightly girl who  
was trodden by a bird ;  
And there's a score of duchesses, surpassing  
womankind,  
Or who have found a painter to make them  
so for pay  
And smooth out stain and blemish with the  
elegance of his mind :  
I knew a phoenix in my youth so let them  
have their day.

The young men every night applaud their  
Gaby's laughing eye,  
And Ruth St. Denis had more charm  
although she had poor luck,  
From nineteen hundred nine or ten, Pav-  
lova's had the cry,

And there's a player in the States who  
gathers up her cloak  
And flings herself out of the room when  
Juliet would be bride  
With all a woman's passion, a child's im-  
perious way,  
And there are—but no matter if there are  
scores beside :  
I knew a phoenix in my youth so let them  
have their day.

There's Margaret and Marjorie and Dorothy  
and Nan,  
A Daphne and a Mary who live in privacy ;  
One's had her fill of lovers, another's had  
but one,  
Another boasts, " I pick and choose and  
have but two or three."  
If head and limb have beauty and the  
instep's high and light  
They can spread out what sail they please  
for all I have to say,  
Be but the breakers of men's hearts or  
engines of delight :  
I knew a phoenix in my youth so let them  
have their day.

There'll be that crowd, that barbarous  
crowd, through all the centuries,  
And who can say but some young belle may  
walk and talk men wild

Who is my beauty's equal, though that my  
heart denies,  
But not the exact likeness, the simplicity of a  
child,  
And that proud look as though she had  
gazed into the burning sun,  
And all the shapely body no tittle gone  
astray.  
I mourn for that most lonely thing; and  
yet God's will be done,  
I knew a phoenix in my youth so let them  
have their day.



## A THOUGHT FROM PROPERTIUS

SHE might, so noble from head  
To great shapely knees  
The long flowing line,  
Have walked to the altar  
Through the holy images  
At Pallas Athene's side,  
Or been fit spoil for a centaur  
Drunk with the unmixed wine.

## BROKEN DREAMS

THERE is grey in your hair.  
Young men no longer suddenly catch their  
    breath  
When you are passing ;  
But maybe some old gaffer mutters a  
    blessing  
Because it was your prayer  
Recovered him upon the bed of death.  
For your sole sake—that all heart's ache  
    have known,  
And given to others all heart's ache,  
From meagre girlhood's putting on  
Burdensome beauty—for your sole sake  
Heaven has put away the stroke of her doom,  
So great her portion in that peace you make  
By merely walking in a room.

Your beauty can but leave among us  
Vague memories, nothing but memories.  
A young man when the old men are done  
    talking  
Will say to an old man, " Tell me of that  
    lady

The poet stubborn with his passion sang us  
When age might well have chilled his blood."

Vague memories, nothing but memories,  
But in the grave all, all, shall be renewed.  
The certainty that I shall see that lady  
Leaning or standing or walking  
In the first loveliness of womanhood,  
And with the fervour of my youthful eyes,  
Has set me muttering like a fool.

You are more beautiful than any one  
And yet your body had a flaw :  
Your small hands were not beautiful,  
And I am afraid that you will run  
And paddle to the wrist  
In that mysterious, always brimming lake  
Where those that have obeyed the holy law  
Paddle and are perfect ; leave unchanged  
The hands that I have kissed  
For old sakes' sake.

The last stroke of midnight dies.  
All day in the one chair  
From dream to dream and rhyme to rhyme  
I have ranged  
In rambling talk with an image of air :  
Vague memories, nothing but memories.

## A DEEP-SWORN VOW

OTHERS because you did not keep  
That deep-sworn vow have been friends of  
mine ;

Yet always when I look death in the face,  
When I clamber to the heights of sleep,  
Or when I grow excited with wine,  
Suddenly I meet your face.

## PRESENCES

THIS night has been so strange that it  
seemed

As if the hair stood up on my head.

From going-down of the sun I have dreamed

That women laughing, or timid or wild,

In rustle of lace or silken stuff,

Climbed up my creaking stair. They had  
read

All I had rhymed of that monstrous thing

Returned and yet unrequited love.

They stood in the door and stood between

My great wood lecturn and the fire

Till I could hear their hearts beating :

One is a harlot, and one a child

That never looked upon man with desire,

And one it may be a queen.

## THE BALLOON OF THE MIND

HANDS do what you're bid ;  
Bring the balloon of the mind  
That bellies and drags in the wind  
Into its narrow shed.

## TO A SQUIRREL AT KYLE-NA-GNO

COME play with me ;  
Why should you run  
Through the shaking tree  
As though I'd a gun  
To strike you dead ?  
When all I would do  
Is to scratch your head  
And let you go.

ON BEING ASKED FOR A  
WAR POEM

I THINK it better that in times like these  
A poet keep his mouth shut, for in truth  
We have no gift to set a statesman right ;  
He has had enough of meddling who can  
    please  
A young girl in the indolence of her  
    youth,  
Or an old man upon a winter's night.



IN MEMORY  
OF ALFRED POLLEXFEN

FIVE-AND-TWENTY years have gone  
Since old William Pollexfen  
Laid his strong bones down in death  
By his wife Elizabeth  
In the grey stone tomb he made.  
And after twenty years they laid  
In that tomb by him and her,  
His son George, the astrologer ;  
And Masons drove from miles away  
To scatter the Acacia spray  
Upon a melancholy man  
Who had ended where his breath began.  
Many a son and daughter lies  
Far from the customary skies,  
The Mall and Eades's grammar school,  
In London or in Liverpool ;  
But where is laid the sailor John ?  
That so many lands had known :  
Quiet lands or unquiet seas  
Where the Indians trade or Japanese.  
He never found his rest ashore  
Moping for one voyage more.  
Where have they laid the sailor John ?

And yesterday the youngest son,  
A humorous, unambitious man,  
Was buried near the astrologer ;  
And are we now in the tenth year ?  
Since he, who had been contented long,  
A nobody in a great throng,  
Decided he would journey home,  
Now that his fiftieth year had come,  
And " Mr. Alfred " be again  
Upon the lips of common men  
Who carried in their memory  
His childhood and his family.  
At all these death-beds women heard  
A visionary white sea-bird  
Lamenting that a man should die ;  
And with that cry I have raised my cry.

## UPON A DYING LADY

### I

#### HER COURTESY

WITH the old kindness, the old distinguished  
    grace  
She lies, her lovely piteous head amid dull  
    red hair  
Propped upon pillows, rouge on the pallor  
    of her face.  
She would not have us sad because she is  
    lying there,  
And when she meets our gaze her eyes are  
    laughter-lit,  
Her speech a wicked tale that we may vie  
    with her  
Matching our broken-hearted wit against  
    her wit,  
Thinking of saints and of Petronius Arbiter.

### II

#### CERTAIN ARTISTS BRING HER DOLLS AND DRAWINGS

Bring where our Beauty lies  
A new modelled doll, or drawing,

With a friend's or an enemy's  
 Features, or maybe showing  
 Her features when a tress  
 Of dull red hair was flowing  
 Over some silken dress  
 Cut in the Turkish fashion,  
 Or it may be like a boy's.  
 We have given the world our passion,  
 We have naught for death but toys.

## III

SHE TURNS THE DOLLS' FACES TO  
 THE WALL

Because to-day is some religious festival  
 They had a priest say Mass, and even the  
     Japanese,  
 Heel up and weight on toe, must face the  
     wall  
 —Pedant in passion, learned in old cour-  
     tesies,  
 Vehement and witty she had seemed—;  
     the Venetian lady  
 Who had seemed to glide to some intrigue  
     in her red shoes,  
 Her domino, her panniered skirt copied  
     from Longhi;  
 The meditative critic; all are on their toes,

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Even our Beauty with her Turkish trousers  
on.

Because the priest must have like every dog  
his day

Or keep us all awake with baying at the  
moon,

We and our dolls being but the world were  
best away.

IV

THE END OF DAY

She is playing like a child  
And penance is the play,  
Fantastical and wild  
Because the end of day  
Shows her that some one soon  
Will come from the house, and say—  
Though play is but half-done—  
“Come in and leave the play.”—

V

HER RACE

She has not grown uncivil  
As narrow natures would  
And called the pleasures evil  
Happier days thought good ;

She knows herself a woman  
 No red and white of a face,  
 Or rank, raised from a common  
 Unreckonable race ;  
 And how should her heart fail her  
 Or sickness break her will  
 With her dead brother's valour  
 For an example still.

## VI

## HER COURAGE

When her soul flies to the predestined  
     dancing-place  
 (I have no speech but symbol, the pagan  
     speech I made  
 Amid the dreams of youth) let her come face  
     to face,  
 Amid that first astonishment, with Grania's  
     shade  
 All but the terrors of the woodland flight  
     forgot  
 That made her Dermuid dear, and some  
     old cardinal  
 Pacing with half-closed eyelids in a sunny  
     spot  
 Who had murmured of Giorgione at his  
     latest breath—

Aye and Achilles, Timor, Babar, Barhaim all  
Who have lived in joy and laughed into the  
face of Death.

## VII

HER FRIENDS BRING HER A  
CHRISTMAS TREE

Pardon great enemy,  
Without an angry thought  
We've carried in our tree,  
And here and there have bought  
Till all the boughs are gay,  
And she may look from the bed  
On pretty things that may  
Please a fantastic head.  
Give her a little grace,  
What if a laughing eye  
Have looked into your face—  
It is about to die.

## EGO · DOMINUS TUUS

### HIC

ON the grey sand beside the shallow stream  
Under your old wind-beaten tower, where  
still

A lamp burns on beside the open book  
That Michael Robartes left, you walk in the  
moon

And though you have passed the best of life  
still trace

Enthralled by the unconquerable delusion  
Magical shapes.

### ILLE

By the help of an image  
I call to my own opposite, summon all  
That I have handled least, least looked upon.

### HIC

And I would find myself and not an image.





From doored and windowed cliff, or half  
 upturned  
 Among the coarse grass and the camel dung.  
 He set his chisel to the hardest stone.  
 Being mocked by Guido for his lecherous  
 life  
 Derided and deriding, driven out  
 To climb that stair and eat that bitter bread,  
 He found the unpersuadable justice, he  
 found  
 The most exalted lady loved by a man.

. HIC

Yet surely there are men who have made  
 their art  
 Out of no tragic war, lovers of life,  
 Impulsive men that look for happiness  
 And sing when they have found it.

ILLE

No not sing,  
 For those that love the world serve it in  
 action,  
 Grow rich, popular and full of influence,  
 And should they paint or write still it is  
 action :  
 The struggle of the fly in marmalade.  
 The rhetorician would deceive his neigh-  
 bours,

The sentimentalist himself; while art  
 Is but a vision of reality.  
 What portion in the world can the artist  
     have  
 Who has awakened from the common  
     dream  
 But dissipation and despair?

Hic

And yet  
 No one denies to Keats love of the world;  
 Remember his deliberate happiness.

ILLE

His art is happy but who knows his mind?  
 I see a schoolboy when I think of him  
 With face and nose pressed to a sweet-shop  
     window,  
 For certainly he sank into his grave  
 His senses and his heart unsatisfied,  
 And made—being poor, ailing and ignorant,  
 Shut out from all the luxury of the world,  
 The coarse-bred son of a livery stable-  
     keeper—  
 Luxuriant song.

Hic

Why should you leave the lamp  
 Burning alone beside an open book,

And trace these characters upon the sands ?  
 A style is found by sedentary toil  
 And by the imitation of great masters.

ILLE

Because I seek an image not a book.  
 Those men that in their writings are most  
     wise  
 Own nothing but their blind, stupefied  
     hearts.  
 I call to the mysterious one who yet  
 Shall walk the wet sands by the edge of the  
     stream  
 And look most like me, being indeed my  
     double,  
 And prove of all imaginable things  
 The most unlike, being my anti-self,  
 And standing by these characters disclose  
 All that I seek ; and whisper it as though  
 He were afraid the birds, who cry aloud  
 Their momentary cries before it is dawn,  
 Would carry it away to blasphemous men.

## A PRAYER ON GOING INTO MY HOUSE

GOD grant a blessing on this tower and  
cottage

And on my heirs, if all remain unspoiled,  
No table, or chair or stool not simple enough  
For shepherd lads in Galilee; and grant  
That I myself for portions of the year  
May handle nothing and set eyes on nothing  
But what the great and passionate have used  
Throughout so many varying centuries.

We take it for the norm; yet should I  
dream

Sinbad the sailor's brought a painted chest,  
Or image, from beyond the Loadstone  
Mountain,

That dream is a norm; and should some  
limb of the devil

Destroy the view by cutting down an ash  
That shades the road, or setting up a  
cottage

Planned in a government office, shorten his  
life,

Manacle his soul upon the Red Sea bottom.

## THE PHASES OF THE MOON

*AN old man cocked his ear upon a bridge;  
He and his friend, their faces to the South,  
Had trod the uneven road. Their boots were  
soiled,  
Their Connemara cloth worn out of shape;  
They had kept a steady pace as though their  
beds,  
Despite a dwindling and late risen moon,  
Were distant. An old man cocked his ear.*

AHERNE

What made that sound ?

ROBARTES

A rat or water-hen  
Splashed, or an otter slid into the stream.  
We are on the bridge; that shadow is the  
tower,  
And the light proves that he is reading still.  
He has found, after the manner of his kind,  
Mere images; chosen this place to live in  
Because, it may be, of the candle light

From the far tower where Milton's platonist  
 Sat late, or Shelley's visionary prince :  
 The lonely light that Samuel Palmer en-  
     graved,  
 An image of mysterious wisdom won by toil ;  
 And now he seeks in book or manuscript  
 What he shall never find.

## AHERNE

Why should not you  
 Who know it all ring at his door, and speak  
 Just truth enough to show that his whole life  
 Will scarcely find for him a broken crust  
 Of all those truths that are your daily  
     bread ;  
 And when you have spoken take the roads  
     again ?

## ROBARTES

He wrote of me in that extravagant style  
 He had learnt from Pater, and to round his  
     tale  
 Said I was dead ; and dead I choose to be.

## AHERNE

Sing me the changes of the moon once  
     more ;  
 True song, though speech : " mine author  
     sung it me."

ROBARTES

Twenty-and-eight the phases of the moon,  
The full and the moon's dark and all the  
    crescents,

Twenty-and-eight, and yet but six-and-  
    twenty

The cradles that a man must needs be rocked  
    in :

For there's no human life at the full or the  
    dark.

From the first crescent to the half, the  
    dream

But summons to adventure and the man  
Is always happy like a bird or a beast ;  
But while the moon is rounding towards the  
    full

He follows whatever whim's most difficult  
Among whims not impossible, and though  
    scarred,

As with the cat-o'-nine-tails of the mind,  
His body moulded from within his body  
Grows comelier. Eleven pass, and then  
Athenae takes Achilles by the hair,  
Hector is in the dust, Nietzsche is born,  
Because the heroes' crescent is the twelfth.

And yet, twice born, twice buried, grow he  
    must,

Before the full moon, helpless as a worm.

The thirteenth moon but sets the soul at war



In its own being, and when that war's begun  
There is no muscle in the arm ; and after  
Under the frenzy of the fourteenth moon  
The soul begins to tremble into stillness,  
To die into the labyrinth of itself !

AHERNE

Sing out the song ; sing to the end, and  
sing  
The strange reward of all that discipline.

ROBARTES

All thought becomes an image and the soul  
Becomes a body : that body and that soul  
Too perfect at the full to lie in a cradle,  
Too lonely for the traffic of the world :  
Body and soul cast out and cast away  
Beyond the visible world.

AHERNE

All dreams of the soul  
End in a beautiful man's or woman's body.

ROBARTES

Have you not always known it ?

AHERNE

The song will have it  
That those that we have loved got their long  
fingers  
From death, and wounds, or on Sinai's top,  
Or from some bloody whip in their own  
hands.  
They ran from cradle to cradle till at last  
Their beauty dropped out of the loneliness  
Of body and soul.

ROBARTES

The lovers' heart knows that.

AHERNE

It must be that the terror in their eyes  
Is memory or foreknowledge of the hour  
When all is fed with light and heaven is bare.

ROBARTES

When the moon's full those creatures of the  
full  
Are met on the waste hills by country men  
Who shudder and hurry by : body and soul  
Estranged amid the strangeness of them-  
selves,

306 PHASES OF THE MOON

Caught up in contemplation, the mind's eye  
Fixed upon images that once were thought,  
For separate, perfect, and immovable  
Images can break the solitude  
Of lovely, satisfied, indifferent eyes.

*And thereupon with aged, high-pitched voice  
Aherne laughed, thinking of the man within,  
His sleepless candle and laborious pen.*

ROBARTES

And after that the crumbling of the moon.  
The soul remembering its loneliness  
Shudders in many cradles ; all is changed,  
It would be the world's servant, and as it  
serves,  
Choosing whatever task's most difficult  
Among tasks not impossible, it takes  
Upon the body and upon the soul  
The coarseness of the drudge.

AHERNE

Before the full  
It sought itself and afterwards the world.

ROBARTES

Because you are forgotten, half out of life,  
And never wrote a book your thought is clear.

Reformer, merchant, statesman, learned man,  
 Dutiful husband, honest wife by turn,  
 Cradle upon cradle, and all in flight and all  
 Deformed because there is no deformity  
 But saves us from a dream.

AHERNE

And what of those  
 That the last servile crescent has set free ?

ROBARTES

Because all dark, like those that are all light,  
 They are cast beyond the verge, and in a  
     cloud,  
 Crying to one another like the bats ;  
 And having no desire they cannot tell  
 What's good or bad, or what it is to triumph  
 At the perfection of one's own obedience ;  
 And yet they speak what's blown into the  
     mind ;  
 Deformed beyond deformity, unformed,  
 Insipid as the dough before it is baked,  
 They change their bodies at a word.

AHERNE

And then ?

## ROBARTES

When all the dough has been so kneaded up  
 That it can take what form cook Nature  
     fancy  
 The first thin crescent is wheeled round  
     once more.

## AHERNE

But the escape ; the song's not finished yet.

## ROBARTES

Hunchback and saint and fool are the last  
     crescents.  
 The burning bow that once could shoot an  
     arrow  
 Out of the up and down, the wagon wheel  
 Of beauty's cruelty and wisdom's chatter—  
 Out of that raving tide—is drawn betwixt  
 Deformity of body and of mind.

## AHERNE

Were not our beds far off I'd ring the bell,  
 Stand under the rough roof-timbers of the  
     hall  
 Beside the castle door, where all is stark  
 Austerity, a place set out for wisdom  
 That he will never find ; I'd play a part ;

He would never know me after all these  
years

But take me for some drunken country  
man ;

I'd stand and mutter there until he caught  
" Hunchback and saint and fool," and that  
they came

Under the three last crescents of the moon,  
And then I'd stagger out. He'd crack his  
wits

Day after day, yet never find the meaning.

*And then he laughed to think that what seemed  
hard*

*Should be so simple—a bat rose from the hazels  
And circled round him with its squeaky cry,  
The light in the tower window was put out.*

## THE CAT AND THE MOON

THE cat went here and there  
And the moon spun round like a top,  
And the nearest kin of the moon  
The creeping cat looked up.  
Black Minnaloushe stared at the moon,  
For wander and wail as he would  
The pure cold light in the sky  
Troubled his animal blood.  
Minnaloushe runs in the grass  
Lifting his delicate feet.  
Do you dance, Minnaloushe, do you dance?  
When two close kindred meet  
What better than call a dance,  
Maybe the moon may learn,  
Tired of that courtly fashion,  
A new dance turn.  
Minnaloushe creeps through the grass  
From moonlit place to place,  
The sacred moon overhead  
Has taken a new phase.  
Does Minnaloushe know that his pupils  
Will pass from change to change,  
And that from round to crescent,

## THE CAT AND THE MOON 311

From crescent to round they range ?  
Minnaloushe creeps through the grass  
Alone, important and wise,  
And lifts to the changing moon  
His changing eyes.



## THE SAINT AND THE HUNCHBACK

### HUNCHBACK

STAND up and lift your hand and bless  
A man that finds great bitterness  
In thinking of his lost renown.  
A Roman Caesar is held down  
Under this hump.

### SAINT

God tries each man  
According to a different plan.  
I shall not cease to bless because  
I lay about me with the taws  
That night and morning I may thrash  
Greek Alexander from my flesh,  
Augustus Caesar, and after these  
That great rogue Alcibiades.

### HUNCHBACK

To all that in your flesh have stood  
And blessed, I give my gratitude,  
Honoured by all in their degrees,  
But most to Alcibiades.

## TWO SONGS OF A FOOL

### I

A SPECKLED cat and a tame hare  
Eat at my hearthstone  
And sleep there ;  
And both look up to me alone  
For learning and defence  
As I look up to Providence.

I start out of my sleep to think  
Some day I may forget  
Their food and drink ;  
Or, the house door left unshut,  
The hare may run till it's found  
The horn's sweet note and the tooth of the  
hound.

I bear a burden that might well try  
Men that do all by rule,  
And what can I  
That am a wandering witted fool  
But pray to God that He ease  
My great responsibilities.

## II

I slept on my three-legged stool by the fire,  
The speckled cat slept on my knee ;  
We never thought to enquire  
Where the brown hare might be,  
And whether the door were shut.  
Who knows how she drank the wind  
Stretched up on two legs from the mat,  
Before she had settled her mind  
To drum with her heel and to leap :  
Had I but awakened from sleep  
And called her name she had heard,  
It may be, and had not stirred,  
That now, it may be, has found  
The horn's sweet note and the tooth of the  
hound.

## ANOTHER SONG OF A FOOL

THIS great purple butterfly,  
In the prison of my hands,  
Has a learning in his eye  
Not a poor fool understands.

Once he lived a schoolmaster  
With a stark, denying look,  
A string of scholars went in fear  
Of his great birch and his great book.

Like the clangour of a bell,  
Sweet and harsh, harsh and sweet,  
That is how he learnt so well  
To take the roses for his meat.

## THE DOUBLE VISION OF MICHAEL ROBARTES

### I

ON the grey rock of Cashel the mind's eye  
Has called up the cold spirits that are born  
When the old moon is vanished from the  
    sky  
And the new still hides her horn.

Under blank eyes and fingers never still  
The particular is pounded till it is man,  
When had I my own will ?  
Oh, not since life began.

Constrained, arraigned, baffled, bent and  
    unbent  
By these wire-jointed jaws and limbs of  
    wood,  
Themselves obedient,  
Knowing not evil and good ;

Obedient to some hidden magical breath.  
They do not even feel, so abstract are they,

So dead beyond our death,  
Triumph that we obey.

## II

On the grey rock of Cashel I suddenly saw  
A Sphinx with woman breast and lion paw,  
A Buddha, hand at rest,  
Hand lifted up that blest ;

And right between these two a girl at play  
That it maybe had danced her life away,  
For now being dead it seemed  
That she of dancing dreamed.

Although I saw it all in the mind's eye  
There can be nothing solider till I die ;  
I saw by the moon's light  
Now at its fifteenth night.

One lashed her tail ; her eyes lit by the  
    moon  
Gazed upon all things known, all things  
    unknown,  
In triumph of intellect  
With motionless head erect.

That other's moonlit eyeballs never moved,  
Being fixed on all things loved, all things  
    unloved,  
Yet little peace he had  
For those that love are sad.

Oh, little did they care who danced between,  
And little she by whom her dance was seen  
So that she danced. No thought,  
Body perfection brought,

For what but eye and ear silence the mind  
With the minute particulars of mankind ?  
Mind moved yet seemed to stop  
As 'twere a spinning-top.

In contemplation had those three so wrought  
Upon a moment, and so stretched it out  
That they, time overthrown,  
Were dead yet flesh and bone.

## III

I knew that I had seen, had seen at last  
That girl my unremembering nights hold  
fast  
Or else my dreams that fly,  
If I should rub an eye,

And yet in flying fling into my meat  
A crazy juice that makes the pulses beat  
As though I had been undone  
By Homer's Paragon

Who never gave the burning town a  
thought ;  
To such a pitch of folly I am brought,

Being caught between the pull  
Of the dark moon and the full,

The commonness of thought and images  
That have the frenzy of our western seas.  
Thereon I made my moan,  
And after kissed a stone,

And after that arranged it in a song  
Seeing that I, ignorant for so long,  
Had been rewarded thus  
In Cormac's ruined house.





MICHAEL ROBARTES AND  
THE DANCER  
(1921)



## MICHAEL ROBARTES AND THE DANCER

HE

OPINION is not worth a rush ;  
In this altar-piece the knight,  
Who grips his long spear so to push  
That dragon through the fading light,  
Loved the lady ; and it's plain  
The half-dead dragon was her thought,  
That every morning rose again  
And dug its claws and shrieked and fought.  
Could the impossible come to pass  
She would have time to turn her eyes,  
Her lover thought, upon the glass  
And on the instant would grow wise.

SHE

You mean they argued.

HE

Put it so ;  
But bear in mind your lover's wage

Is what your looking-glass can show,  
And that he will turn green with rage  
At all that is not pictured there.

SHE

May I not put myself to college ?

HE

Go pluck Athena by the hair ;  
For what mere book can grant a knowledge  
With an impassioned gravity  
Appropriate to that beating breast,  
That vigorous thigh, that dreaming eye ?  
And may the devil take the rest.

SHE

And must no beautiful woman be  
Learned like a man ?

HE

Paul Veronese

And all his sacred company  
Imagined bodies all their days  
By the lagoon you love so much,  
For proud, soft, ceremonious proof  
That all must come to sight and touch ;  
While Michael Angelo's Sistine roof

His " Morning " and his " Night " disclose  
 How sinew that has been pulled tight,  
 Or it may be loosened in repose,  
 Can rule by supernatural right  
 Yet be but sinew.

SHE

I have heard said  
 There is great danger in the body.

HE

Did God in portioning wine and bread  
 Give man His thought or His mere body ?

SHE

My wretched dragon is perplexed.

HE

I have principles to prove me right.  
 It follows from this Latin text  
 That blest souls are not composite,  
 And that all beautiful women may  
 Live in uncomposite blessedness,  
 And lead us to the like—if they  
 Will banish every thought, unless  
 The lineaments that please their view

When the long looking-glass is full,  
Even from the foot-sole think it too.

SHE

They say such different things at school.

## SOLOMON AND THE WITCH

AND thus declared that Arab lady:  
" Last night, where under the wild moon  
On grassy mattress I had laid me,  
Within my arms great Solomon,  
I suddenly cried out in a strange tongue  
Not his, not mine."

And he that knew  
All sounds by bird or angel sung  
Answered : " A crested cockerel crew  
Upon a blossoming apple bough  
Three hundred years before the Fall,  
And never crew again till now,  
And would not now but that he thought,  
Chance being at one with Choice at last,  
All that the brigand apple brought  
And this foul world were dead at last.  
He that crowed out eternity  
Thought to have crowed it in again.  
A lover with a spider's eye  
Will find out some appropriate pain,  
Aye, though all passion's in the glance,  
For every nerve : lover tests lover  
With cruelties of Choice and Chance ;  
And when at last that murder's over



Maybe the bride-bed brings despair  
 For each an imagined image brings  
 And finds a real image there ;  
 Yet the world ends when these two things,  
 Though several, are a single light,  
 When oil and wick are burned in one ;  
 Therefore a blessed moon last night  
 Gave Sheba to her Solomon."

" Yet the world stays " :

" If that be so,  
 Your cockerel found us in the wrong  
 Although he thought it worth a crow.  
 Maybe an image is too strong  
 Or maybe is not strong enough."

" The night has fallen ; not a sound  
 In the forbidden sacred grove  
 Unless a petal hit the ground,  
 Nor any human sight within it  
 But the crushed grass where we have lain ;  
 And the moon is wilder every minute.  
 Oh, Solomon ! let us try again."

## AN IMAGE FROM A PAST LIFE

HE

NEVER until this night have I been stirred.  
The elaborate star-light throws a reflection  
On the dark stream,  
Till all the eddies gleam ;  
And thereupon there comes that scream  
From terrified, invisible beast or bird :  
Image of poignant recollection.

SHE

An image of my heart that is smitten through  
Out of all likelihood, or reason,  
And when at last,  
Youth's bitterness being past,  
I had thought that all my days were cast  
Amid most lovely places ; smitten as though  
It had not learned its lesson.

HE

Why have you laid your hands upon my  
eyes ?  
What can have suddenly alarmed you

## 330 IMAGE FROM A PAST LIFE

Whereon 'twere best  
My eyes should never rest ?  
What is there but the slowly fading west,  
The river imaging the flashing skies,  
All that to this moment charmed you ?

### SHE

A sweetheart from another life floats there  
As though she had been forced to linger  
From vague distress  
Or arrogant loveliness,  
Merely to loosen out a tress  
Among the starry eddies of her hair  
Upon the paleness of a finger.

### HE

But why should you grow suddenly afraid  
And start—I at your shoulder—  
Imagining  
That any night could bring  
An image up, or anything  
Even to eyes that beauty had driven mad,  
But images to make me fonder.

### SHE

Now she has thrown her arms above her  
head ;  
Whether she threw them up to flout me,

IMAGE FROM A PAST LIFE 33<sup>1</sup>

Or but to find,  
Now that no fingers bind,  
That her hair streams upon the wind,  
I do not know, that know I am afraid  
Of the hovering thing night brought me.

## UNDER SATURN

Do not because this day I have grown  
    saturnine  
Imagine that lost love, inseparable from my  
    thought  
Because I have no other youth, can make  
    me pine ;  
For how should I forget the wisdom that  
    you brought,  
The comfort that you made? Although  
    my wits have gone  
On a fantastic ride, my horse's flanks are  
    spurred  
By childish memories of an old cross  
    Pollexfen,  
And of a Middleton, whose name you never  
    heard,  
And of a red-haired Yeats whose looks,  
    although he died  
Before my time, seem like a vivid memory.  
You heard that labouring man who had  
    served my people. He said  
Upon the open road, near to the Sligo quay—  
No, no, not said, but cried it out—" You  
    have come again

And surely after twenty years it was time  
to come."

I am thinking of a child's vow sworn in  
vain

Never to leave that valley his fathers called  
their home.

*November 1919.*

## EASTER, 1916

I HAVE met them at close of day  
Coming with vivid faces  
From counter or desk among grey  
Eighteenth-century houses.  
I have passed with a nod of the head  
Or polite meaningless words,  
Or have lingered awhile and said  
Polite meaningless words,  
And thought before I had done  
Of a mocking tale or a gibe  
To please a companion  
Around the fire at the club,  
Being certain that they and I  
But lived where motley is worn:  
All changed, changed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born.

That woman's days were spent  
In ignorant good will,  
Her nights in argument  
Until her voice grew shrill.  
What voice more sweet than hers  
When young and beautiful,  
She rode to harriers ?

This man had kept a school  
And rode our winged horse ;  
This other his helper and friend  
Was coming into his force ;  
He might have won fame in the end,  
So sensitive his nature seemed,  
So daring and sweet his thought.  
This other man I had dreamed  
A drunken, vain-glorious lout.  
He had done most bitter wrong  
To some who are near my heart,  
Yet I number him in the song ;  
He, too, has resigned his part  
In the casual comedy ;  
He, too, has been changed in his turn,  
Transformed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born.

Hearts with one purpose alone  
Through summer and winter seem  
Enchanted to a stone  
To trouble the living stream.  
The horse that comes from the road,  
The rider, the birds that range  
From cloud to tumbling cloud,  
Minute by minute they change ;  
A shadow of cloud on the stream  
Changes minute by minute ;  
A horse-hoof slides on the brim,  
And a horse plashes within it  
Where long-legged moor-hens dive,



And hens to moor-cocks call.  
Minute by minute they live :  
The stone's in the midst of all.

Too long a sacrifice  
Can make a stone of the heart.  
O when may it suffice ?  
That is heaven's part, our part  
To murmur name upon name,  
As a mother names her child  
When sleep at last has come  
On limbs that had run wild.  
What is it but nightfall ?  
No, no, not night but death ;  
Was it needless death after all ?  
For England may keep faith  
For all that is done and said.  
We know their dream ; enough  
To know they dreamed and are dead ;  
And what if excess of love  
Bewildered them till they died ?  
I write it out in a verse—  
MacDonagh and MacBride  
And Connolly and Pearse  
Now and in time to be,  
Wherever green is worn,  
Are changed, changed utterly :  
A terrible beauty is born.

*September 25, 1916.*

## SIXTEEN DEAD MEN

O BUT we talked at large before  
The sixteen men were shot,  
But who can talk of give and take,  
What should be and what not?  
While those dead men are loitering there  
To stir the boiling pot.

You say that we should still the land  
Till Germany's overcome ;  
But who is there to argue that  
Now Pearse is deaf and dumb ?  
And is their logic to outweigh  
MacDonagh's bony thumb ?

How could you dream they'd listen  
That have an ear alone  
For those new comrades they have found  
Lord Edward and Wolfe Tone,  
Or meddle with our give and take  
That converse bone to bone.

## THE ROSE TREE

“ O words are lightly spoken,”  
Said Pearse to Connolly,  
“ Maybe a breath of politic words  
Has withered our Rose Tree ;  
Or maybe but a wind that blows  
Across the bitter sea.”

“ It needs to be but watered ”  
James Connolly replied,  
“ To make the green come out again  
And spread on every side,  
And shake the blossom from the bud  
To be the garden’s pride.”

“ But where can we draw water ”  
Said Pearse to Connolly,  
“ When all the wells are parched away ?  
O plain as plain can be  
There’s nothing but our own red blood  
Can make a right Rose Tree.”

## ON A POLITICAL PRISONER

SHE that but little patience knew,  
From childhood on, had now so much  
A grey gull lost its fear and flew  
Down to her cell and there alit,  
And there endured her fingers' touch  
And from her fingers ate its bit.

Did she in touching that lone wing  
Recall the years before her mind  
Became a bitter, an abstract thing,  
Her thought some popular enmity :  
Blind and leader of the blind  
Drinking the foul ditch where they lie ?

When long ago I saw her ride  
Under Ben Bulbin to the meet,  
The beauty of her country-side  
With all youth's lonely wildness stirred,  
She seemed to have grown clean and sweet  
Like any rock-bred, sea-borne bird :

Sea-borne, or balanced on the air  
When first it sprang out of the nest

340 ON A POLITICAL PRISONER

Upon some lofty rock to stare  
Upon the cloudy canopy,  
While under its storm-beaten breast  
Cried out the hollows of the sea.

## THE LEADERS OF THE CROWD

THEY must to keep their certainty accuse  
All that are different of a base intent ;  
Pull down established honour ; hawk for  
news

Whatever their loose phantasy invent  
And murmur it with bated breath, as though  
The abounding gutter had been Helicon  
Or calumny a song. How can they know  
Truth flourishes where the student's lamp  
has shone,

And there alone, that have no solitude ?  
So the crowd come they care not what may  
come.

They have loud music, hope every day  
renewed

And heartier loves ; that lamp is from the  
tomb.

## TOWARDS BREAK OF DAY

Was it the double of my dream  
The woman that by me lay  
Dreamed, or did we halve a dream  
Under the first cold gleam of day ?

I thought : " There is a waterfall  
Upon Ben Bulbin side,  
That all my childhood counted dear ;  
Were I to travel far and wide  
I could not find a thing so dear."  
My memories had magnified  
So many times childish delight.

I would have touched it like a child  
But knew my finger could but have touched  
Cold stone and water. I grew wild  
Even accusing heaven because  
It had set down among its laws :  
Nothing that we love over-much  
Is ponderable to our touch.

I dreamed towards break of day,  
The cold blown spray in my nostril.

But she that beside me lay  
Had watched in bitterer sleep  
The marvellous stag of Arthur,  
That lofty white stag, leap  
From mountain steep to steep.



## DEMON AND BEAST

FOR certain minutes at the least  
That crafty demon and that loud beast  
That plague me day and night  
Ran out of my sight ;  
Though I had long pernned in the gyre,  
Between my hatred and desire,  
I saw my freedom won  
And all laugh in the sun.

The glittering eyes in a death's head  
Of old Luke Wadding's portrait said  
Welcome, and the Ormonds all  
Nodded upon the wall,  
And even Stafford smiled as though  
It made him happier to know  
I understood his plan.  
Now that the loud beast ran  
There was no portrait in the Gallery  
But beckoned to sweet company,  
For all men's thoughts grew clear  
Being dear as mine are dear.

But soon a tear-drop started up  
For aimless joy had made me stop

Beside the little lake  
To watch a white gull take  
A bit of bread thrown up into the air ;  
Now gyring down and perning there  
He splashed where an absurd  
Portly green-pated bird  
Shook off the water from his back ;  
Being no more demoniac  
A stupid happy creature  
Could rouse my whole nature.

Yet I am certain as can be  
That every natural victory  
Belongs to beast or demon,  
That never yet had freeman  
Right mastery of natural things,  
And that mere growing old, that brings  
Chilled blood, this sweetness brought ;  
Yet have no dearer thought  
Than that I may find out a way  
To make it linger half a day.

O what a sweetness strayed  
Through barren Thebaid,  
Or by the Mareotic sea  
When that exultant Anthony  
And twice a thousand more  
Starved upon the shore  
And withered to a bag of bones :  
What had the Caesars but their thrones ?

## THE SECOND COMING

TURNING and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer ;  
Things fall apart ; the centre cannot hold ;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and  
    everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned ;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand ;  
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.  
The Second Coming ! Hardly are those  
    words out  
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi  
Troubles my sight : somewhere in sands  
    of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a  
    man,  
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.

The darkness drops again ; but now I know  
That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,  
And what rough beast, its hour come round  
at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born ?

## A PRAYER FOR MY DAUGHTER

ONCE more the storm is howling and half  
hid

Under this cradle-hood and coverlid  
My child sleeps on. There is no obstacle  
But Gregory's wood and one bare hill  
Whereby the haystack and roof-levelling  
wind,

Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed ;  
And for an hour I have walked and prayed  
Because of the great gloom that is in my  
mind.

I have walked and prayed for this young  
child an hour

And heard the sea-wind scream upon the  
tower,

And under the arches of the bridge, and  
scream

In the elms above the flooded stream ;

Imagining in excited reverie

That the future years had come,

Dancing to a frenzied drum,

Out of the murderous innocence of the sea.

PRAYER FOR MY DAUGHTER 349

May she be granted beauty and yet not  
Beauty to make a stranger's eye distraught,  
Or hers before a looking-glass, for such,  
Being made beautiful overmuch,  
Consider beauty a sufficient end,  
Lose natural kindness and maybe  
The heart-revealing intimacy  
That chooses right and never find a friend.

Helen being chosen found life flat and dull  
And later had much trouble from a fool,  
While that great Queen, that rose out of the  
    spray,  
Being fatherless could have her way  
Yet chose a bandy-legged smith for man.  
It's certain that fine women eat  
A crazy salad with their meat  
Whereby the Horn of Plenty is undone.

In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned ;  
Hearts are not had as a gift but hearts are  
    earned  
By those that are not entirely beautiful ;  
Yet many, that have played the fool  
For beauty's very self, has charm made wise,  
And many a poor man that has roved,  
Loved and thought himself beloved,  
From a glad kindness cannot take his eyes.

May she become a flourishing hidden tree  
That all her thoughts may like the linnet be,

### 350 PRAYER FOR MY DAUGHTER

And have no business but dispensing round  
Their magnanimities of sound,  
Nor but in merriment begin a chase,  
Nor but in merriment a quarrel.  
Oh, may she live like some green laurel  
Rooted in one dear perpetual place.

My mind, because the minds that I have  
loved,  
The sort of beauty that I have approved,  
Prosper but little, has dried up of late,  
Yet knows that to be choked with hate  
May well be of all evil chances chief.  
If there's no hatred in a mind  
Assault and battery of the wind  
Can never tear the linnet from the leaf.

An intellectual hatred is the worst,  
So let her think opinions are accursed.  
Have I not seen the loveliest woman born  
Out of the mouth of Plenty's horn,  
Because of her opinionated mind  
Barter that horn and every good  
By quiet natures understood  
For an old bellows full of angry wind ?

Considering that, all hatred driven hence,  
The soul recovers radical innocence  
And learns at last that it is self-delighting,  
Self-appeasing, self-affrighting,  
And that its own sweet will is heaven's will ;

PRAYER FOR MY DAUGHTER 351

She can, though every face should scowl  
And every windy quarter howl  
Or every bellows burst, be happy still.

And may her bride-groom bring her to a  
house

Where all's accustomed, ceremonious ;  
For arrogance and hatred are the wares  
Peddled in the thoroughfares.  
How but in custom and in ceremony  
Are innocence and beauty born ?  
Ceremony's a name for the rich horn,  
And custom for the spreading laurel tree.

*June 1919.*



## A MEDITATION IN TIME OF WAR

For one throb of the Artery,  
While on that old grey stone I sat  
Under the old wind-broken tree,  
I knew that One is animate  
Mankind inanimate phantasy.

TO BE CARVED ON A STONE  
AT THOOR BALLYLEE

I, THE poet William Yeats,  
With old mill boards and sea-green slates,  
And smithy work from the Gort forge,  
Restored this tower for my wife George ;  
And may these characters remain  
When all is ruin once again.



## NOTES

*The Hosting of the Sidhe* (p. 3).—The gods of ancient Ireland, the Tuatha De Danaan, or the Tribes of the goddess Danu, or the Sidhe, from Aes Sidhe, or Sluagh Sidhe, the people of the Faery Hills, as these words are usually explained, still ride the country as of old. Sidhe is also Gaelic for wind, and certainly the Sidhe have much to do with the wind. Their journey in whirling wind, the winds that were called the dance of the daughters of Herodias in the Middle Ages, Herodias doubtless taking the place of some old goddess. When the country people see the leaves whirling on the road they bless themselves, because they believe the Sidhe to be passing by. Knocknarea is in Sligo, and the country people say that Maeve, still a great queen of the western Sidhe, is buried in the cairn of stones upon it. I have written of Clooth-na-Bare in *The Celtic Twilight*. She “went all over the world, seeking a lake deep enough to drown her faery life, of which she had grown weary, leaping from hill to hill, and setting up a cairn of stones wherever her feet lighted, until, at last, she found the deepest water in the world in little Lough Ia, on the top of the bird mountain, in Sligo.” I forget, now, where I heard this story, but it may have been from a priest at Collooney. Clooth-na-Bare would mean the old woman of Bare, but is evidently a corruption of Cailleac Bare, the old woman of Bare, who, under the names Bare, and Berah, and Beri, and Verah, and Dera, and Dhira, appears in the legends of many places.—1899-1906.

*The Host of the Air* (p. 7).—This poem is founded on an old Gaelic ballad that was sung and translated for me by a woman at Ballisodare in County Sligo; but in the ballad the husband found the keeners keening his wife when he got to his house.—1899.

*He mourns for the Change that has come upon Him and His Beloved, and longs for the End of the World* (p. 17).—My deer and hound are properly related to the deer and hound that flicker in and out of the various tellings of the Arthurian legends, leading different knights upon adventures, and to the hounds and to the hornless deer at the beginning of, I think, all tellings of Usheen's journey to the country of the young. The hound is certainly related to the Hounds of Annwoyn or of Hades, who are white, and have red ears, and were heard, and are, perhaps, still heard by Welsh peasants, following some flying thing in the night winds; and is probably related to the hounds that Irish country people believe will awake and seize the souls of the dead if you lament them too loudly or too soon. An old woman told a friend and myself that she saw what she thought were white birds, flying over an enchanted place, but found, when she got near, that they had dogs' heads; and I do not doubt that my hound and these dog-headed birds are of the same family. I got my hound and deer out of a last century Gaelic poem about Oisín's journey to the country of the young. After the hunting of the hornless deer, that leads him to the seashore, and while he is riding over the sea with Niamh, he sees amid the waters—I have not the Gaelic poem by me, and describe it from memory—a young man following a girl who has a golden apple, and afterwards a hound with one red ear following a deer with no horns. This hound and this deer seem plain images of the desire of man "which is for the woman," and "the desire of the woman which is for the desire of the man," and of all desires that are as these. I have read them in this way in *The Wanderings of*

*Usheen* or Oisín, and have made my lover sigh because he has seen in their faces "the immortal desire of immortals."

The man in my poem who has a hazel wand may have been Aengus, Master of Love; and I have made the boar without bristles come out of the West, because the place of sunset was in Ireland, as in other countries, a place of symbolic darkness and death.—1899.

*The Cap and Bells* (p. 25).—I dreamed this story exactly as I have written it, and dreamed another long dream after it, trying to make out its meaning, and whether I was to write it in prose or verse. The first dream was more a vision than a dream, for it was beautiful and coherent, and gave me the sense of illumination and exaltation that one gets from visions, while the second dream was confused and meaningless. The poem has always meant a great deal to me, though, as is the way with symbolic poems, it has not always meant quite the same thing. Blake would have said, "the authors are in eternity," and I am quite sure they can only be questioned in dreams.—1899.

*The Valley of the Black Pig* (p. 27).—All over Ireland there are prophecies of the coming rout of the enemies of Ireland, in a certain Valley of the Black Pig, and these prophecies are, no doubt, now, as they were in the Fenian days, a political force. I have heard of one man who would not give any money to the Land League, because the Battle could not be until the close of the century; but, as a rule, periods of trouble bring prophecies of its near coming. A few years before my time, an old man who lived at Lisadill, in Sligo, used to fall down in a fit and rave out descriptions of the Battle; and a man in Sligo has told me that it will be so great a battle that the horses shall go up to their fetlocks in blood, and that their girths, when it is over, will rot from their bellies for lack of a hand to unbuckle them. If

one reads Rhys' *Celtic Heathendom* by the light of Frazer's *Golden Bough*, and puts together what one finds there about the boar that killed Diarmuid, and other old Celtic boars and sows, one sees that the battle is mythological, and that the Pig it is named from must be a type of cold and winter doing battle with the summer, or of death battling with life.—1899-1906.

*The Secret Rose* (p. 36).—I find that I have unintentionally changed the old story of Conchubar's death. He did not see the Crucifixion in a vision but was told of it. He had been struck by a ball made out of the dried brains of an enemy and hurled out of a sling; and this ball had been left in his head and his head had been mended, the *Book of Leinster* says, with thread of gold because his hair was like gold. Keeling, a writer of the time of Elizabeth, says, "In that state did he remain seven years, until the Friday on which Christ was crucified, according to some historians; and when he saw the unusual changes of the creation and the eclipse of the sun and the moon at its full, he asked of Bucrach, a Leinster Druid, who was along with him, what was it that brought that unusual change upon the planets of Heaven and Earth. 'Jesus Christ, the Son of God,' said the Druid, 'who is now being crucified by the Jews.' 'That is a pity,' said Conchubar; 'were I in his presence I would kill those who were putting him to death.' And with that he brought out his sword, and rushed at a woody grove which was convenient to him, and began to cut and fell it; and what he said was, that if he were among the Jews, that was the usage he would give them, and from the excessiveness of his fury which seized upon him, the ball started out of his head, and some of the brain came after it, and in that way he died. The wood of Lanshraigh, in Feara Rois, is the name by which that shrubby wood is called."

I have imagined Cuchulain meeting Fand "walking among flaming dew," because, I think, of something in Mr. Standish O'Grady's books.

I have founded the man "who drove the gods out of their liss," or fort, upon something I have read about Caolte after the battle of Gabra, when almost all his companions were killed, driving the gods out of their liss, either at Osraighe, now Ossory, or at Eas Ruaidh, now Asseroe, a waterfall at Ballyshannon, where Ilbreac, one of the children of the goddess Danu, had a liss. But maybe I only read it in Mr. Standish O'Grady, who has a fine imagination, for I find no such story in Lady Gregory's book.

I have founded "the proud dreaming king" upon Fergus, the son of Roigh, but when I wrote my poem here, and in the song in my early book, "Who will drive with Fergus now," I only knew him in Mr. Standish O'Grady, and my imagination dealt more freely with what I did know than I would approve of to-day.

I have founded him "who sold tillage, and house, and goods," upon something in "The Red Pony," a folk tale in Mr. Larminie's *West Irish Folk Tales*. A young man "saw a light before him on the high road. When he came as far, there was an open box on the road, and a light coming up out of it. He took up the box. There was a lock of hair in it. Presently he had to go to become the servant of a king for his living. There were eleven boys. When they were going out into the stable at ten o'clock, each of them took a light but he. He took no candle at all with him. Each of them went into his own stable. When he went into his stable he opened the box. He left it in a hole in the wall. The light was great. It was twice as much as in the other stables." The king hears of it, and makes him show him the box. The king says, "You must go and bring me the woman to whom the hair belongs." In the end, the young man, and not the king, marries the woman.—1899-1906.

*The Shadowy Waters* (p. 99).—I published in 1902 a version of "The Shadowy Waters," which, as I had no stage experience whatever, was unsuitable for stage



representation, though it had some little success when played during my absence in America in 1904, with very unrealistic scenery before a very small audience of cultivated people. On my return I rewrote the play in its present form, but found it still too profuse in speech for stage representation. In 1906 I made a stage version, which was played in Dublin in that year and is now in my volume of plays. The present version must be considered as a poem only.—1922.

*Prefatory Poem* (p. 175).—"Free of the ten and four" is an error I cannot now correct, without more rewriting than I have a mind for. Some merchant in Villon, I forget the reference, was "free of the ten and four." Irish merchants exempted from certain duties by the Irish Parliament were, unless memory deceives me again for I am writing away from books, "free of the eight and six."—1914.

*Poems beginning with that "To a Wealthy Man" and ending with that "To a Shade"* (pp. 193-199).—In the thirty years or so during which I have been reading Irish newspapers, three public controversies have stirred my imagination. The first was the Parnell controversy. There were reasons to justify a man's joining either party, but there were none to justify, on one side or on the other, lying accusations forgetful of past service, a frenzy of detraction. And another was the dispute over "The Playboy." There may have been reasons for opposing as for supporting that violent, laughing thing, though I can see the one side only, but there cannot have been any for the lies, for the unscrupulous rhetoric spread against it in Ireland, and from Ireland to America. The third prepared for the Corporation's refusal of a building for Sir Hugh Lane's famous collection of pictures. . . .

[NOTE.—I leave out two long paragraphs which have been published in earlier editions of these poems. There

is no need now to defend Sir Hugh Lane's pictures against Dublin newspapers. The trustees of the London National Gallery, through his leaving a codicil to his will unwitnessed, have claimed the pictures for London, and propose to build a wing to the Tate Gallery to contain them. Some that were hostile are now contrite, and doing what they can, or letting others do unhindered what they can, to persuade Parliament to such action as may restore the collection to Ireland.—Jan. 1917.]

These controversies, political, literary, and artistic, have showed that neither religion nor politics can of itself create minds with enough receptivity to become wise, or just and generous enough to make a nation. Other cities have been as stupid—Samuel Butler laughs at shocked Montreal for hiding the Discobolus in a cellar—but Dublin is the capital of a nation, and an ancient race has nowhere else to look for an education. Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister* describes a saintly and naturally gracious woman, who getting into a quarrel over some trumpery detail of religious observance, grows—she and all her little religious community—angry and vindictive. In Ireland I am constantly reminded of that fable of the futility of all discipline that is not of the whole being. Religious Ireland—and the pious Protestants of my childhood were signal examples—thinks of divine things as a round of duties separated from life and not as an element that may be discovered in all circumstance and emotion, while political Ireland sees the good citizen but as a man who holds to certain opinions and not as a man of good will. Against all this we have but a few educated men and the remnants of an old traditional culture among the poor. Both were stronger forty years ago, before the rise of our new middle class which showed as its first public event, during the nine years of the Parnellite split, how base at moments of excitement are minds without culture.—1914.

Lady Gregory in her *Life of Sir Hugh Lane* assumes that the poem which begins "Now all the truth is out" (p. 197), was addressed to him. It was not; it was addressed to herself.—1922.

*The Dolls* (p. 232).—The fable for this poem came into my head while I was giving some lectures in Dublin. I had noticed once again how all thought among us is frozen into "something other than human life." After I had made the poem, I looked up one day into the blue of the sky, and suddenly imagined, as if lost in the blue of the sky, stiff figures in procession. I remembered that they were the habitual image suggested by blue sky, and looking for a second fable called them "The Magi" (p. 231), complementary forms of those enraged dolls.—1914.

"*Unpack the Loaded Pern*" (p. 263).—When I was a child at Sligo I could see above my grandfather's trees a little column of smoke from "the pern mill," and was told that "pern" was another name for the spool, as I was accustomed to call it, on which thread was wound. One could not see the chimney for the trees, and the smoke looked as if it came from the mountain, and one day a foreign sea-captain asked me if that was a burning mountain.—1919.

*The Phases of the Moon* (p. 301), *The Double Vision of Michael Robartes* (p. 316), *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (p. 323).—Years ago I wrote three stories in which occurs the names of Michael Robartes and Owen Aherne. I now consider that I used the actual names of two friends, and that one of these friends, Michael Robartes, has but lately returned from Mesopotamia where he has partly found and partly thought out much philosophy. I consider that John Aherne is either the original of Owen Aherne or some near relation of the man that was, and that both he and Robartes, to whose

namesake I had attributed a turbulent life and death, have quarrelled with me. They take their place in a phantasmagoria in which I endeavour to explain my philosophy of life and death, and till that philosophy has found some detailed exposition in prose certain passages in the poems named above may seem obscure. To some extent I wrote them as a text for exposition.—1922.

*A Note on the Setting of these Poems to Music.*—A musician who would give me pleasure should not repeat a line, or put more than one note to one syllable. I am a poet not a musician, and dislike to have my words distorted or their animation destroyed, even though the musician claims to have expressed their meaning in a different medium.—1922.

W. B. Y.

THE END



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